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on the planet

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Minister 'given wrong advice' □ Gulf war syndrome study announced

Veterans force retreat

David Fairhall and Rebecca Smithers

THE Government yesterday buckled under six years of pressure from veterans' organisations when it announced a major investigation into Gulf war syndrome, the condition it had previously refused to acknowledge.

One of the two studies announced will examine how veterans' fertility has been affected and whether their children show an abnormal incidence of birth defects.

The other study will try to determine whether veterans now suffer more illness and try to identify possible causes. Veterans typically complain of chronic fatigue, memory loss, muscle pains and depression.

The £1.3 million programme, over three years, will involve 12,000 soldiers, 6,000 of them will be veterans of the 1990/91 conflict and the rest will be a comparative group who did not go to the Gulf.

Opposition MPs said the Government's about-turn on the issue was humiliating.

Nicholas Soames, the Armed Forces Minister, couped the Commons announcement with renewed apologies for misleading Parliament over the use of dangerous organo-phosphate pesticides during the conflict.

Emphasising the Government's desire to be "entirely open" about the matter, Mr Soames admitted that Ministry of Defence civil servants and military officials provided ministers with inaccurate information over a period of more than two years. An investigation was being carried out and those responsible would be disciplined if necessary.

About 51,000 service men and women served in the Gulf. Mr Soames said 921 veterans had been examined. The Government was keeping an "open mind" on whether there is generally more illness among our veterans than should be expected and whether there are Gulf-service related factors at work which, as yet, remain to be discovered.

The defence ministry is funding the three-year statistical studies recommended by the Medical Research Council. The studies include a general analysis of 3,000 Gulf veterans' medical history compared with the experience of 3,000 other soldiers who served in places such as Bosnia; and a specific investigation, on a similar scale, of

Gulf veterans' reproductive health.

The studies will be co-ordinated with a third epidemiological study among Britons who served in the Gulf — more than 1,000 of whom have complained of subsequent illness. The work, funded by the United States, is being carried out at King's College, London.

The announcement was immediately condemned as "too little, too late" by veterans' representatives. Tony Flint, of the National Gulf Veterans and Families Association, said: "By the time this research is complete at least another 100 veterans will be dead." But his members would willingly co-operate with the studies.

The birth defects study will go beyond research carried out in the US, where this aspect had received little attention, he said. According to the association, 14 cases of a rare heart condition had been reported among veterans' children, far more than the normal incidence.

Mr Soames admitted that service personnel were vaccinated against anthrax and plague to counter a feared Iraqi biological missile attack — until yesterday this was an official military secret. Whooping cough vaccine was also used to boost the anthrax protection.

The minister also confirmed that organo-phosphate pesticides, similar to sheep dips, which have caused health problems among farmers and are chemically related to nerve gas, were bought from local Saudi Arabians and extensively used — something not disclosed earlier in repeated Parliamentary answers.

David Clark, the shadow defence secretary, called Mr Soames's statement "a humiliating climbdown". He added: "Since allegations of Gulf war syndrome came to the fore, we have called on the Government to honour its commitment to veterans. The Government's failure to act earlier has led to three years of uncertainty and suffering for our troops."

Liberal Democrat defence spokesman Menzies Campbell described the announcement as "a very substantial humiliation".

Mr Soames also faced criticism from Tory backbenchers, such as Edwina Currie, who were concerned about the further uncertainty for their afflicted constituents and about the question of no-fault compensation. Mr Soames said he accepted "the frustration and personal anguish" of the victims.



Damon and Michelle Seager with their son Grant. 'They have said it is just one of those things' PHOTOGRAPH: RICHARD OLIVER

'I do wish sometimes these people could come and look at our little boy and see the sort of things we have to do to enable him just to be here'

GRANT is 15 months now. You would not know it. The cherished first child of Damon and Michelle Seager, born in peaceful times after his father's return from the Gulf war, is a long way from walking, writes Sarah Bosley.

He cannot crawl. He cannot even sit up. He is fed through a tube in his stomach and several times an hour, day and night, his mother or a nurse must suction the saliva out of his throat to stop him choking.

Grant cannot swallow. "They do tell us that not swallowing is a very rare condition," said Michelle. "They have said it is just

one of those things. I can't believe that the baby of two reasonably healthy people can have such problems."

She is 31 and Damon is 28 — not old parents, who have a statistically increased chance of babies with birth defects. Michelle thinks Grant's misfortunes stem from his father's service as an army driver in the Gulf. "I think whatever they were subjected to in the Gulf has damaged them in some way and they are producing bad sperm."

She added: "I just think somebody somewhere is responsible for this and I do wish sometimes they could come — these government people — and look at our lit-

tle boy and see the sort of things we have to do to enable him just to be here."

When he was born, in September last year, mother and baby both nearly died. After a pregnancy full of pain, knowing, she says, that something was wrong, Michelle haemorrhaged six weeks before the baby was due.

The boy is back in hospital now. He has continual chest infections and chronic lung disease.

While other children are leaping the usual development hurdles, Grant's parents are left on the starting grid, wondering whether he will survive. "It looks very bleak," said Michelle.

Millennium star project faces axe in political row

Ewen MacAskill, Chief Political Correspondent

THE centrepiece of the millennium celebrations, a spectacular exhibition dome in London's Greenwich, is at serious risk of being scrapped to decide whether the costings are realistic, especially if Labour is not supportive.

The Deputy Prime Minister, Michael Heseltine, had adopted it as his pet project and pushed ahead in spite of protests that national lottery money should be spent on smaller projects throughout the country rather than the dome.

The fate of the Millennium Dome, which was to have held 12 pavilions, looks to have been decided yesterday at a series of private meetings held at Westminster between politicians and those directly involved in the project.

Both Mr Heseltine and the National Heritage Secretary, Virginia Bottomley, will seek to blame Labour, who in turn will point the finger at Mr Heseltine for mishandling it, not least by leaving it so late.

Mrs Bottomley was said last night to be looking for a Commons slot to make a statement.

Labour senses a disaster in the making and has cooled towards the project after looking at the costings.

The Millennium Commission, which administers lottery funds, will meet today to consider the business plan for the Greenwich project drawn up by Millennium Central, the group overseeing it. A decision on whether to go ahead has to be made before Christmas.

The crux of the problem is that Millennium Central, which has costed the project at £700 million, needs a promise to underwrite the funds from both the Conservatives and Labour, the latter because the private sector

recognises that it might form the next government.

That guarantee is not likely to be forthcoming from Labour, which does not want to face in Government a project whose costs keep spiralling and to which an open-ended cheque has been given.

It is up to the commission to decide whether the costings are realistic, especially if Labour is not supportive.

Work on the dome, the size of two Wembley stadiums, is scheduled to begin in the middle of next year and be completed in autumn 1998. The opening was planned for December 31, 1999.

Estimates of the cost have ranged from £250 million to £1 billion but Millennium Central has put the figure at £700 million in its draft budget for its presentation to the Millennium Commission today, with £430 million spent on infrastructure and the exhibitions and the remainder on running costs.

Millennium Central estimates it can balance the books by getting £200 million from lottery money, a further £150 million from the private sector and the rest raised from gate receipts, sponsorship and other forms of income.

A spokesman for Millennium Central said last night: "We are looking for party consensus round the project. Without that, the project will not happen."

Lottery funds allocated to the commission are due to end after 2000.

Labour's shadow heritage secretary, Jack Cunningham, indicated last week that he had other plans for the lottery money after that date. The shadow education spokesman, David Blunkett, has been looking at diverting the money into schools and other projects.

Work has already begun on clearing the Greenwich site for the dome.

The Guardian
Gulf babies maimed at birth

The Guardian investigation which broke the story in 1993

MPs to censure Willetts for role in cash-for-questions affair

David Hencke Westminster Correspondent

MPs agreed last night on a report criticising the role of David Willetts, the Paymaster General, over the cash for questions affair.

After 25 hours of deliberation Tony Newton, the Leader

of the House, finally got Conservative, Labour and Liberal Democrat MPs on the Commons standards and privileges committee to agree to put forward a report to the Speaker today.

Their findings will be published this afternoon. It is understood that the report will be unanimous.

The most likely outcome is

expected to conclude that Mr Willetts, then a junior whip, behaved badly in trying to influence the Commons members interests committee over the cash for questions affair two years ago. But it was not clear whether the censure will be strong enough to provoke his resignation.

The present inquiry was started two months ago after

a complaint was laid against Mr Willetts by Andrew Miller, Labour MP for Ellesmere Port, after a memorandum written by Mr Willetts became public. In the memo, written on the day the Guardian exposed ministers Neil Hamilton and Tim Smith for receiving cash from Harrods owner Mohamed Al Fayed for asking Parliamentary Questions, Mr Willetts suggests the committee uses its "good Tory majority" to rush through proceedings, or treat the matter as sub judice.

MPs questioned both Mr Willetts and Sir Geoffrey Johnson Smith, then chairman of the members interests committee, about its contents. Mr Willetts denied he was trying to advise the committee

what to do. But he came under tough questioning from Quentin Davies, Tory MP for Stamford, who said he must either be lying to the committee or have been lying when he wrote the memo.

Since then Mr Newton has had to balance the views of Mr Davies with other more loyalist Tories in trying to reach an unanimity.

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Sketch

Kunzle cakes and fruitcakes



Simon Hoggart

IT WAS a weird Prime Minister's Question Time yesterday, even weirder than usual. The weirdest moment came when Mr Major announced that he had no intention of resigning before the next election — a remark greeted with total silence from the Conservative benches.

But the rest of the session was pretty weird too. For one thing, Mr Major seemed to imagine that he was still at home in Huntingdon and was welcoming Mr Blair to tea in his conservatory.

Mr Blair was very polite, to begin with. Did the Prime Minister agree with Sir Leon Brittan that Conservative divisions in Europe were weakening Britain's position within the EU? he inquired, in the same way as he might have remarked on the vicarage roses.

Mr Major didn't agree, but then he didn't actually disagree. He offered Mr Blair a metaphorical cup of tea. And a Kunzle Cake. (Do you remember Kunzle Cakes? They were sort of chocolate and spongy and filled with sweet, gummy gunk. I feel sure they are still on sale at the Huntingdon 9 Till Late Mini-Mart.)

He mused that two things were damaging the British position. One was that the House of Commons was divided. The other was that the rest of the EU was expecting "a very easy ride were there to be a Labour government".

The implication — that the crisis in the Conservative Party can be blamed on 17 years of Labour misrule (the 17 years we are expecting to start next year) — was cheeky even by Mr Major's high standards. Something I've noticed is that he always has to have someone else to blame for everything that goes wrong, and it's usually the Opposition.

However, he continued to

Review

From steely snap to tender trap

John Fordham

Cassandra Wilson
Shepherd's Bush Empire

ON THE TURN of the decade, they used to promote her as "the jazz diva for the nineties". She possessed several virtues that endorsed the contention. Her voice mostly occupied a majestic mid-register with a steely snap like Nina Simone's. Her shows were not set pieces but seemed to bend with the feet. But her work also seemed in tension between the percussive restlessness of New York street-corner funk and an older jazz of standard ballads and feline melodic ingenuity. It was a tension that made Wilson seem compellingly like a young woman forging a new way of singing out of the materials around her.

Last night, the jury was out: Wilson abandoned her investigations of cutting-edge nouveau funk around 1993 and opted for a popular roots music that set contemporary material and classic Robert Johnson blues in a guitar-led acoustic band instead of a funk or jazz group, and this set-up she maintained. But unlike earlier London performances with a similar repertoire, Wilson seemed restless and elusive, as if she had sent a reluctant doppelgänger to perform in her place. The mix of resonant detail and irresistible momentum that had marked out her most imposing performances were obscured by a sound mix that buried her subtleties and the ensemble's difficulties in finding a groove it could share.

This review appeared in later editions yesterday.

Catholic schools face influx

David Ward

PRINCIPALS of leading Roman Catholic sixth form colleges are calling on education ministers to help cope with a boom in demand for places from students of all faiths and none.

Colleges with good exam results and a clear moral ethos are snowed under with applications. "We operate an open admissions policy here,"

speak in the same courteous, slightly mannered fashion. The two men were beginning to resemble Hinge and Bracket, a pair of drag queens abusing each other, but within the strict rules of social nicety.

Mr Blair sucked the butter thoughtfully out of a toasted crumpet. "After his Sunday interview, much of which I would agree with, there is less clear water between him, his deputy, one half of the Cabinet and this side of the House, than there is between him and his backbenchers."

We held our breath. Was Mr Major going to defect? It would solve an awful lot of his problems. The main difficulty would be finding him a safe Labour seat in time for the next election. Huntingdon might do.

He mused aloud that a Labour government would abandon many of the positions which the Conservatives had taken up in Europe. "A little more Earl Grey, Mr Blair? I think there's still a drop in the pot..." (I made the last bit up.)

At this point the elaborate etiquette became something of a strain and they started chucking metaphorical slices of Battenberg cake at each other. Mr Blair pointed out that Jerry Hayes (C. Halloway) had described Teresa Gorman (C. Billericay) as "part of the politically insane — and some may say he is a very good judge of these matters".

Soon afterwards the conservatory was invaded by hoodlums and ruff-raff, and the gentlemanly mood was destroyed. Ms Lynne Jones (Lab, Selly Oak) asked whether he would take seriously any other European government which was in as much of a shambles as this one. Last time it had happened, he had resigned as party leader. Should he now resign as prime minister?

Mr Major said, to the weird silence from behind him, that the simple answer was no.

"The splits on that side of the House are seismic!" he added. He was getting over-excited. People who live in glass sitting rooms shouldn't throw teapots.

At that point, Mrs Gorman — the politically insane one — stood up, to the cheers of the whole Labour party. "Ee, seismic!" said someone with a happy, northern accent.

New stability force in Bosnia will help smoke out elusive suspects indicted by tribunal in The Hague

Nato to pursue war wanted

John Palmer in Brussels

NATO forces in Bosnia are to adopt a tough "suffocation" strategy in the new year in a concerted effort to seek out and help arrest more than 60 indicted war criminals.

Nato foreign ministers, meeting in Brussels yesterday, were told that without more robust action to bring alleged war criminals to trial in The Hague, the alliance might unwittingly lay the seeds of another war in Bosnia.

The existing 60,000-strong Nato peace force, IFOR, has resisted active involvement in the detention of suspected war criminals, arguing that its main task was to separate the warring parties.

But while Nato was reluctant last night to spell out precisely what new instructions troops will be given when a new stability force of 25,000 to 30,000 — S-For — takes over on December 20, it was clear that a much higher priority would be given to the drive to capture suspects wanted by the international war crimes tribunal in the Netherlands.

"The curtain of steel which has protected some of the most notorious war criminals and prevented them being seized and put on trial is beginning to weaken," one Nato diplomat said.

"We will want to harass them and to suffocate them by gradually hemming them into places where they can be more readily apprehended. I would expect S-For to begin to act sooner rather than later on the issue of war criminals if only because there will be a gradual rundown in the number of troops in Bosnia over the next 18 months."

The new strategy was described as moving beyond the present low-key role on the war crimes issue, though stopping short of "turning S-For into a police force".

It will include the provision of increased intelligence on the movements of suspected war criminals, and new authority for the international peace force to follow up cases on non-compliance with the tribunal by local police.

But at the heart of the new strategy is a greater willingness to have S-For involved in the arrest and transfer to The Hague of indicted war criminals. No final decisions will be taken on the troops' exact role until a detailed military study of all the issues involved has been completed.

"We are all concerned about the situation of the war

criminals and we are very concerned to ensure that the authority of the international war crimes tribunal is upheld," the United States secretary of state, Warren Christopher, said last night. "We will be seeing how new and more effective methods of help can be used to help the war crimes tribunal carry out its responsibilities."

The Canadian foreign minister, Lloyd Axworthy, said: "The continued freedom of indicted war criminals is one of the greatest threats to a durable peace, and if S-For departs without having contributed to the apprehension of these people, I believe we will have left the seeds of future conflict in Bosnia to germinate."

The meeting also condemned the Serbian government's refusal to recognise operations wins in local elections last month. It called

on President Slobodan Milosevic to reverse the decision.

"We are dismayed that the Serbian authorities have ignored the calls of the international community to respect internationally recognised democratic principles," a statement issued by the foreign ministers said.

Mr Christopher explicitly warned President Milosevic that he faced deepening international isolation.

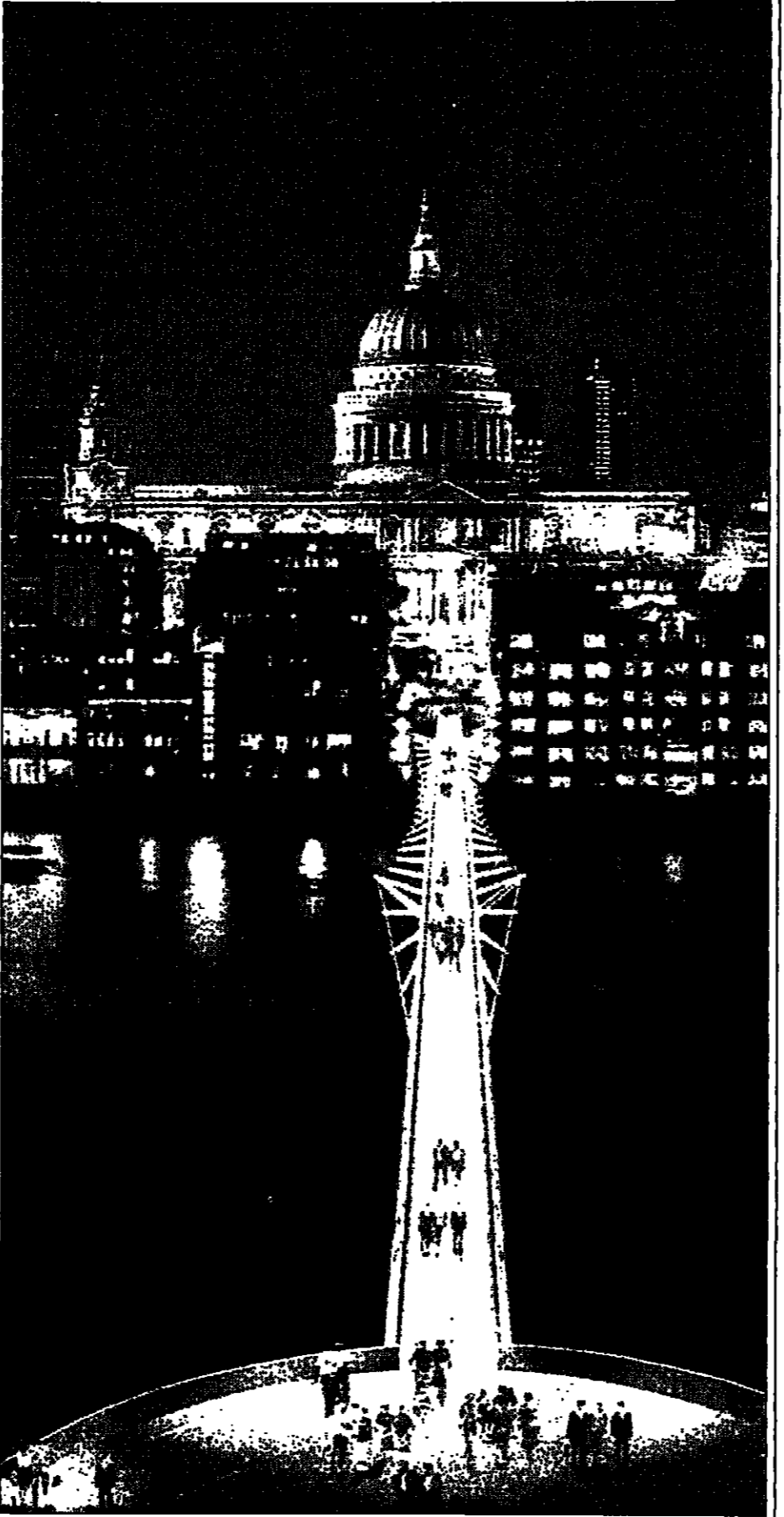
"The people of Serbia deserve what their neighbours in central Europe have: clean elections, a free press, a normal market economy," he told the meeting. "If President Milosevic respects their will, Serbia can enjoy the legitimacy and assistance it needs. If he seeks to rule Serbia as an unreformed dictatorship, it will only increase his isolation and the suffering of his people."

The US and other Nato governments also distanced themselves from the Croatian president, Franjo Tudjman, who is under increasing political siege from the democratic opposition in his country.

"It was most inappropriate for President Tudjman to recently award a medal to the Croatian General (Zvonimir) Blaskic, who is in detention and awaiting trial in The Hague for war crimes," a US state department spokesman said.

Meanwhile, the alliance yesterday said it would begin admitting new members from central Europe next year, regardless of whether Russia agrees to form a partnership with Nato. Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovenia have been widely tipped as the first new entrants.

Tough line on Russia, page 7



An artist's impression of the view towards St Paul's over the Millennium bridge, which will be London's first new crossing for more than a century

Britons' metal arc design chosen to bridge Thames

Dan Glaister
Arts Correspondent

THE competition to design London's first pedestrian bridge was won by the British team of architect Sir Norman Foster and sculptor Sir Anthony Caro, it was announced yesterday.

The bridge, an arc of stainless steel and cable, will run from below St Paul's Cathedral on the north bank to the Bankside power station, the site of the new Tate Gallery of Modern Art.

Organisers hope the bridge, the first to be built across the Thames in more than a century, will be finished in time for the opening of the Bankside gallery in spring 2000.

Sir Norman said yesterday: "We are delighted with the news. It's a great honour."

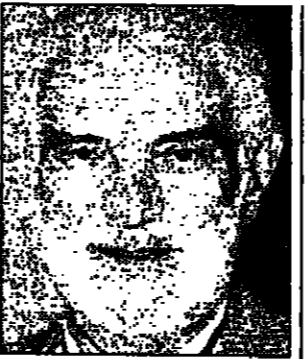
The competition attracted 226 entries from around the world, and was

competition is one of several London-based bridge-building projects to have been unveiled recently. Others include a scheme to revamp Hungerford Bridge, and a competition for a habitable bridge.

A preliminary application has been made to the Millennium Commission for funding for the estimated £10 million needed to build the bridge. Other funding has proved difficult to find, although the project has the backing of the Corporation of London.

Michael Cassidy, chairman of the corporation's policy and resources committee, said: "This project is crucial for establishing an image for London."

The bridge design is simple, featuring a four-metre wide platform and Sir Anthony's distinctive oxidised metal. There will be a viewing platform offering a sweeping view up to St Paul's Cathedral.



Sir Anthony Caro: 'It will be a beautiful addition to city'

unusual in inviting combined designs from architects and artists.

Sir Anthony said: "I feel great, I'm delighted with the announcement. I just want to get on with it now and hopefully it will get built soon. It will be a tremendously beautiful addition to London. It will be a plus."

The pedestrian bridge

Troubles force up Ulster security bill

David Sharrock
Ireland Correspondent

THE price of renewed IRA violence and a disastrous summer of civil unrest came home to Northern Ireland yesterday when the Government increased spending on security by £120 million, bringing the total within reach of £1 billion a year.

The security budget is to be increased by £120 million over the next three years, the Northern Ireland Secretary Sir Patrick Mayhew announced yesterday, reversing the "peace dividend" resulting from the IRA and loyalist ceasefires. Deep cuts in many public services have had to be made as a consequence.

Total security spending for 1997-98 will rise to £384 million. Justifying the increase, Sir Patrick said he would have much preferred to have used the money on job creation, schools, hospital and housing, but the IRA and "those responsible for the disturbances which occurred last summer" bore a heavy responsibility.

"The IRA's abominable ending of its ceasefire, witnessed in the bombings earlier this year and recent terrorist atrocities, means that more resources need to be allocated to security and compensation," he said.

"On top of this we have had the cost of the very serious disturbances of last summer. The cost of Drumcree is currently estimated to be £40 million. This constitutes a grievous and wanton self-inflicted wound on the people of this province."



Sir Patrick Mayhew: End of the peace dividend

With law and order topping the Government's spending priority, the RUC will receive an additional £77 million over the next three years to deal with security. A further £42 million has been provided to the Compensation Agency to meet the predicted cost of claims resulting from terrorist attacks and civil unrest.

Training and employment are the main areas to suffer, with a £29 million cut in spending on community jobs programmes, a reduction of 2,000 places on the Jobskills adult training scheme and the closure of a training centre at Dundonald, east Belfast.

Spending in Northern Ireland remains 30 per cent higher per head than in the rest of the UK. But cuts have been implemented across the board, hitting education, health and roads.

Meanwhile, policing costs to protect Catholic churchgo-

ers from loyalist demonstrators in Ballymena, County Antrim have risen to an estimated £550,000. The cost of the 13-week security operation was confirmed yesterday as detectives questioned two men about an arson attack at the Church of Our Lady in the town's Harryville area.

Another demonstration is expected on Saturday.

On Monday flammable liquid was poured through a smashed window of the church and set alight. The flames were quickly put out by a passing RUC patrol.

Last Saturday evening about 100 Protestants turned out to support their Catholic neighbours attending mass as police kept the demonstrators back. The loyalists are protesting at nationalist objections to an Orange Order parade through the nearby village of Dunloy.

Responding to the publication of the spending plans, the shadow Northern Ireland secretary, Marjorie Mowlem, said: "This is a budget for the short term. Spending has increased on programmes to deal with policy failures like the cost of unemployment and BSE. But in the long term, everyone will suffer from cuts in housing, education, training, agriculture and research."

"IRA violence and, on top of that, the disturbances this summer and after Drumcree are major factors increasing costs. But that is only part of the story."

"The Government is making year-on-year cuts in the overall budget as well, which makes the job of building a stable economic base to underpin the peace process harder."

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A wedding under way in the Old Blacksmith's Shop at Gretna Green, Scotland, a tradition which began in 1792 and is still attracting couples drawn by its romantic history

200 years of runaway success

Kamal Ahmed on the sale of marriage records, right, from Gretna Green, the Scottish village whose romantic history still attracts 4,000 couples a year



The path of true love

IT IS a name heavy with the whiff of scandal and clandestine arrangements. From Lord Thomas Erskine to Sir James Goldsmith, the great and the good have packed their bags and headed north for a taste of its romantic notoriety.

A unique insight will be revealed by auctioneers tomorrow into the affairs of Gretna Green, the small Scottish village that was the first port of call for English lovers who wanted to marry without the blessing of their parents.

Anderson and Garland, an auction house based in Newcastle upon Tyne, will sell the archive, thought to be the largest private collection of marriage records from Gretna Green to come under the hammer this century.

The four hard-bound registers, two soft-bound ledgers and 21 bundles of loose-leaf records are the legacy of the Lang family who set them-

1818 Lord Thomas Erskine, the former Lord Chancellor of England, ran north of the border at the age of 68 to marry his housekeeper, Sarah Buck. Frowned upon by right-thinking English gentlemen, Lord Erskine, who was accused of "opium eating", had already had eight children by a previous marriage.

1826 Edward Gibbon Wakefield, a colonial statesman, married Ellen Turner, a 15-year-old heiress. Wakefield was tracked down and arrested for abduction. He was sentenced to three years in prison at Lancaster assizes. The Gretna "priest" was

self-styled as the "Gretna priests" in the nineteenth century. The sale also includes marriage correspondence,

1831 Marius Goring, the Hollywood actor, married Mary Shiel, although it is not clear why he chose Gretna. He later engaged in a 30-year battle with Equity over rules forbidding actors to visit South Africa.

1953 Sir James Goldsmith married Isobel Patino, the Catholic daughter of a Bolivian tin millionaire. Legend has it that Isobel's father remarked that his family was "not in the habit of marrying Jews", to which Sir James replied: "And we do not marry Red Indians."

His sons from a previous marriage were so opposed to the union that they attempted to have their father committed to a mental institution to prevent it. Lord Erskine managed to avoid his sons during his race

receipts for "services rendered" and invoices. Ceremonies could cost up to £50, a small fortune at the time. "This is the first time re-

records such as these have been auctioned on the open market," said Andrew McCoull, of Anderson and Garland. "They are the earliest records of marriages from Gretna Green and there has been fantastic interest in the collection which is considered a historical treasure of Britain's rich past."

David Lang was the first self-styled priest, setting up in 1792. With no formal training or church backing, it was his job to note down the names of those who wanted to get married and the witnesses, all that was needed for an official marriage in Scotland at the time.

He was taking advantage of the 1754 Act of Parliament which made it illegal to hold unlicensed weddings in England. Before then "Fleet" marriages, named after the taverns of Fleet Street in London where they took place, were the refuge of those who did not want their marriages announced to the general public, particularly to avoid the wrath of parents.

Mr Lang did a roaring trade at Gretna. He handed on his burgeoning business to his son, Simon, and from there it was handed on to his grandson, William.

The records of the marriages read like a great and good of English nineteenth century society. In 1818 Mr Lang conducted the marriage of Lord Thomas Erskine, the former Lord Chancellor of England who ran away with his housekeeper, Sarah Buck, at the age of 68.

His sons from a previous marriage were so opposed to the union that they attempted to have their father committed to a mental institution to prevent it. Lord Erskine managed to avoid his sons during his race

to Scotland by dressing as a woman.

In 1826 Mr Lang married Edward Gibbon Wakefield, described as a "colonial statesman", to the 15-year-old heiress, Ellen Turner. Wakefield was later found guilty of abduction after a trial at Lancaster and sentenced to three years in prison.

During the nineteenth century, Parliament attempted to close the Gretna loophole by insisting that people who married there had been resident in Scotland for at least three years. Couples simply slept rough or stayed at inns for the qualification period.

The village's advantage over England remained until 1969 when the need for parental consent to marriage for those under 21 south of the

border was repealed, bringing English and Scots law into line.

Others married at Gretna include the Hollywood actor Marius Goring, to Mary Shiel, and Sir James Goldsmith, who married Isobel Patino, the daughter of a Bolivian tin millionaire.

Although having no legal advantage, Gretna remains popular among the romantically inclined. Last year nearly 4,000 people were married there. It has the only registry office in Scotland to make a profit.

"I suppose it is the romance of all those couples who were married before at Gretna Green," said Susan Clark, director of the village's museum. "That is a very special thing."

Leah Betts died after ignoring drug advice

Alan Watkins

LEAH Betts, the Essex teenager who died after taking an ecstasy tablet during her 18th birthday party, was advised by the friend who gave it to her to take only half, the the tablet, a jury at Norwich crown court heard yesterday.

Sarah Cargill, aged 18, said she was concerned that the tablet was stronger than the ecstasy which Leah had previously taken. But she said Leah ignored her advice and swallowed the whole pill. She collapsed into a coma three hours later and died in November last year.

Analysis had shown there was nothing chemically wrong with the tablet Leah had taken and that she had fallen victim to the arbitrary nature of the drug.

The court heard that Miss Cargill had obtained the drug through a network of friends after it had been bought from an unknown dealer at a Basildon night club.

Steven Packman, aged 18, of Laindon, Essex, pleaded not guilty to supplying a prohibited drug.

Andrew Williams, prosecuting, said Packman was not being charged with culpability in Leah's death but with being involved in the supply.

Mr Williams told the jury that Packman purchased the tablets from the dealer and passed them to Stephen Smith, aged 18, who has already admitted his involvement and will be sentenced later.

Mr Williams said Smith would give evidence on Packman's involvement.

Mr Williams said Smith had passed the tablets to his girlfriend, Louise Yexley, and she in turn handed them on to Miss Cargill.

Miss Cargill told the court she and Leah had each paid £2.50 - a total of £45 - to Smith for a total of four tablets.

She said she and Leah had then taken the tablets at the birthday party at the Betts' home in Latchingdon, Essex.

The remaining two tablets were recovered by police after Leah was taken ill.

Prosecuting counsel said Miss Cargill and Miss Yexley had admitted their part in the

chain of supply and had been cautioned by police.

Miss Cargill had approached Miss Yexley a few days before Leah's party to ask Smith to get tablets. Initially he was reluctant, but then agreed to do so. Smith asked Packman to try and obtain them for him. Packman purchased them at the night club and passed them to Smith hidden in a matchbox.

Miss Cargill said she and Leah had initially started to experiment with drugs at the beginning of 1995, first with "things like cannabis", then with whizz - amphetamine.

They had also tried LSD and on four previous occasions had taken ecstasy.

"As far as I am aware the same as me at the same times," Miss Cargill said.

A statement from Leah's father, Paul Betts, a former police inspector, read to the court describing the birthday party as going "quite nicely" until they were told their daughter was upstairs feeling unwell. Her stepmother quickly realised that Leah had taken something and she admitted swallowing an ecstasy tablet which she said had been supplied to her by Smith.

After Leah's death, her father and stepmother, Janet Betts, launched a nationwide campaign to warn other young people of the dangers of drugs, and to raise funds to set up an advice line for teenagers.

The trial continues.



Leah Betts: Took fatal dose of ecstasy at birthday party

Six army officers accused of rape

College men charged following complaint by civilian student

Luke Harding

SIX army officers at one of Britain's most prestigious military colleges will appear in court today charged with raping a civilian student.

The men - two captains, a lieutenant and three cadets - were arrested by Ministry of Defence detectives following a complaint four weeks ago. The complainant is believed to be in her early 20s and was allegedly raped after entering an accommodation block where the men were having a sauna.

The officers will appear before magistrates in Wantage, Oxfordshire, charged with raping the student at the Royal Military College, at Shrivenham, Wiltshire, six months ago.

The officers are all serving with the Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers and are aged 20-28.

Five appeared before magistrates last Wednesday. Three were sent to a remand centre and two to prison. A sixth officer will appear today after being arrested in North Yorkshire last month and granted conditional bail.

A spokesman for MoD police, Rob Need, said: "Six

army officers have been arrested and charged with rape at the college. They were arrested by officers on December 3 for an offence on May 27."

The officers have been named as Lieutenant Matthew James Tupling, aged 23, of Bordon, Hampshire, Cadet Andrew John Stout, 20, of Whickham, Tyneside, Cadet Darren Bartlett, 23, of Arborfield, Berkshire, Cadet Nicholas Oettinger, 20, of Preston, Lancashire, Captain Phillip James Bates, 26, of Bordon, Hampshire, and Capt Ian Barlow, 28, of Warrisham, Suffolk.

The college, which teaches civilians and military personnel, specialises in management, science and technology. Research also takes place at the college, which is attached to Cranfield University.

Founded in 1772, it is one of several army staff colleges which play a crucial role in army training and research.

The Royal Military College of Science has 3,500 students and is run by a commandant, Major-General Alistair Irwin, CBE, and a principal, Professor Phil Hutchinson.

The Royal Electrical and Mechanical Engineers contains the craftsmen who keep the military machine running smoothly. It has specialists, including mechanics and computer operators, attached to most regiments who have been vital to many successful military operations.

Old boys include the Duke of York, who served at Shrivenham six years ago before taking up the command of HMS Collingwood.

I can only infer that Julian Lewis thinks it wrong for an employee of the Conservative Party to disagree with government policy, but quite acceptable for a Conservative candidate to stand for election while refusing to endorse the party's manifesto. Logic has never been his strong suit.

When's World G2 page 7

Radio tribute to music of 20th century

Dan Glaister Arts correspondent

CLASSIC FM it is not. Radio 3 yesterday launched Sounding The Century, an ambitious three-year festival to celebrate the music of the 20th century.

But reflecting the station's unashamedly pro-active bent, many unfamiliar names will figure in the programme of concerts, operas, documentaries and premieres. Ligeti, Pärt and Knussen will jostle for air time with Elgar, Mahler, Stravinsky and Stockhausen.

"The whole aim is to expand people's horizons," the Radio 3 controller, Nicholas Kenyon, said launching the project. "We're saying that we believe in every one of these pieces. They all reflect something important about our century. Twentieth century music is wonderful and it is right that the BBC should celebrate it."

The festival will open next February with a performance of Stravinsky's *The Rite Of Spring* conducted by Pierre Boulez at the South Bank Centre.

Highlights include *The Stabat Mater*, a series looking at one of the century's key composers; a *Century Of Singers*, a weekly survey of 100 great singers of the

20th century; and 100 Cultural Contributions, an attempt to amass a cultural library or canon of the century's most significant cultural contributions.

Several premieres will take place as part of the festival, which aims to involve every orchestra in the country and feature both British and foreign composers and performers.

Pierre Boulez's explosive/fixe will receive its first London performance, conducted by the organiser of the festival, the composer George Benjamin.

But perhaps the most alarming premiere will be an opera by Nicholas Maw of the pop philosophy best seller, *Sophie's Choice*, described by one critic as "Playboy goes to Auschwitz". Already a film and a book, *Sophie's Choice* is a joint commission by Radio 3 and the Royal Opera House, and is scheduled for the opening season of the refurbished Royal Opera House.

George Benjamin said yesterday: "It is a complex project but its object is simple: to reflect the wonders of music in this century. There will be a lot of work that has been neglected but deserves to be heard."

But Mr Benjamin was insistent that only 20th century music would be heard. "Anything written in 1895 doesn't have a chance."

Six notables

EDWARD ELGAR (1857-1934): English composer who went from regional obscurity to international fame in the first decade of the century. Perhaps the



first great composer to realise the possibilities of the gramophone, making many recordings of his own work. His music combines an epic nobility with popular lightness. One of his best known works: *Land Of Hope And Glory* (1902).

IGOR STRAVINSKY (1882-1971): he was often criticised during his lifetime for what some musicians perceived as the "soulless" character of his compositions. But



Stravinsky can now be seen to have worked in and exploited most of the musical styles of the 20th century. He was born in Russia, but he left in 1934 and eventually settled in the United States. His best known work is probably *The Rite Of Spring* (1913).

PIERRE BOULEZ (1905-): French composer, a former chief conductor of the BBC Symphony Orchestra, and theorist. He is an experimental composer who



studied harmony under Messiaen. He later went on to develop a distinctive free-form compositional style which leaves many options open to the individual performer. Among his best known works: *Le Marteau sans Maitre* (1953).

KARLHEINZ STOCKHAUSEN (1928-): he is baffling but has an enormous following. He evolved a theory of "parameters" and divided music into moments of time,



mixing electronic noise with musical instruments. He introduced an element of chance in some of his compositions which culminated with *Zyklus* (1959), in which the performer can start at any one of 17 pages. Best known work: *Stimmung* (1968).

György Ligeti (1923-): the Hungarian composer. His is currently the name to drop in contemporary classical music circles. One of the century's most individual and original composers, he has been influenced by sources as diverse as medieval as well as modernist Hungarian folk-song, jazz, minimalism and African



music. He is probably best known for his composition *Clock And Clouds* which he completed in 1972/3.

Arvo Pärt (1935-): Another unfamiliar name that will figure in the Radio 3 programmes. He is an Estonian composer with a background in radio. His early work was influenced by Prokofiev and Shostakovich. His later work shows great mobility of style. It incorporates Gregorian chant and experimental rhythmic organisation. His best known work is the *Third Symphony*.



Phillip Jones Griffiths, who worked for the Guardian in the 1960s, with one of his most famous images from Vietnam. An exhibition of his photojournalism opens at the National Museum and Gallery in Cardiff tomorrow. PHOTOGRAPH: JEFF MORGAN

Sinking spirits makes spirits sink

Chris Millill Medical Correspondent

A QUICK drink to lift the spirits may seem a good idea at the time, but it could cause depression and lead to a vicious cycle of excessive consumption, doctors warned yesterday.

A leaflet from the Royal College of Psychiatrists and General Practitioners says that heavy drinking will cause depression, not cure it, and that many people suffering from depression who drink heavily may have the bottle to blame for their condition rather than other factors such as bereavement.

Bruce Ritson, chairman of the Royal College of Psychiatrists' substance abuse section, said there was growing knowledge about the biochemical changes in the brain caused by alcohol. Heavy drinking could cause changes in cell membranes in the brain which affected chemical transmitters such as serotonin, which controlled mood.

He said this partly explained the edginess in people with hangovers, and also partly explained the craving for drink in people trying to give it up.

However, Dr Ritson, a consultant at the Royal Edinburgh hospital, said the brain cell changes would repair themselves in 10 days to a month after people stopped drinking. He added: "Overcoming the drinking problems often produces a rapid improvement in well-being and resolution of the depression."

He said around one in 10 patients going to family doctors had some form of depressive illness, and about 5 per cent of the population probably had drinking problems.

Among those with diagnosed drinking problems, half of females and a third of males suffered from serious depression. Suicide was seven times more common among people with alcohol problems.

"A surprising number of people do not make the link between drinking and depression," said Dr Ritson. "A soft drink's claim to be a miracle hangover cure was yesterday strongly disputed by the drinks industry, writes Alex Bellis.

Exit, which will go on sale in the new year, is marketed as speeding up the breakdown of alcohol, with importers Free-Party Marketing claiming drinkers sober up faster and may avoid a hangover.

But three associations rounded on the claim, saying that it was not substantiated on medical grounds. "In 2,000 years of alcohol production no known way of speeding up the breakdown of alcohol within the body has been found. It takes one hour for one unit of alcohol to be broken down by the liver," said Alcohol Concern, the British Soft Drinks Association and the Portman Group in a joint statement.

The three groups called for public analysts to carry out a study on the bitter lemon-tasting drink and for trading standards officers to consider the claims being made for it.

Police again fail to find victim of car crash

Wreck Chaudhary

A POLICE force which was criticised for failing to find the body of a woman following a car crash said yesterday that it failed to detect another accident, in which a youth died, because of fog.

Bedfordshire police admitted it took them more than an hour to reach the scene of last Friday's crash, in which Richard Horricks, aged 17, was killed, after a patrol car took a wrong turn in the fog.

It is believed that Mr Horricks was still alive when his crashed car was spotted in a field at Bletsoe, north Bedfordshire, by Ministry of Defence security officers. They did not stop to investigate.

After police failed to find the car, they contacted the security officers again to check its location. It was found that the car had been driven for a further 200 yards before Mr Horricks collapsed and died.

Mr Horricks, who lived at Riseley, north Bedfordshire, was an A level student at Sharnbrook Upper School, where his twin sister is also a pupil. He was returning from a night out with friends when the crash occurred.

In May 1995, two Bedfordshire officers failed to find the body of Sally London, aged 39, who died after her car crashed into a field.

She was discovered 24 hours later by a member of the public. The two officers concerned were dismissed but were reinstated earlier this year following an appeal to the Home Secretary.

A Bedfordshire police spokesman said yesterday that there were no similarities between the two cases and that there were no plans to investigate or discipline the two officers sent out to investigate last Friday's accident.

He added: "We received a telephone call saying that there was an abandoned vehicle in a field. There was total fog, which made it difficult to find the car. The family of the dead man, who know the area

well, spent three hours looking for him and couldn't find him. But we are looking into the management of the incident."

At a press conference, Anthony Howlett-Brown, assistant chief constable, said: "I think with the benefit of hindsight there are things we would like to have done, like getting back to the MoD at an earlier stage."

"If it had been reported as an accident or injury incident, clearly more would have been done at the time. I have called for a full report."

A police statement said that two officers were sent from Greyfriars police station in Bedford to deal with last Friday's call.

It added: "Unfortunately in the fog, officer took the first turn to Thurlough and was unable to locate the car. As he was unable to find what he believed was a routine incident of an abandoned car, a decision was taken to return to search in daylight the next day."

Following further information an hour later, Greyfriars control room contacted the MoD security and asked them to verify the location.

"When the security officers returned to the scene, they found the car had moved 200 yards towards the A6. The driver had collapsed nearby and was later pronounced dead."

In the previous two weeks there had been 170 reported cases of abandoned vehicles.

Mr Horricks's stepfather, John Kineston, aged 45, yesterday said: "The policeman concerned was 21, not much older than Richard. It would be wrong to blame him for what happened."

He added: "I do find it incredible, though, that the MoD staff drove past the car without stopping. Richard suffered terrible injuries and we have been told they would have proved fatal in any case."

Richard's mother Avril, aged 48, said: "It is terrible for us and must be for the security officers who drove past the car."

£4m of army ammunition reported missing in Bosnia

David Hencke Westminster Correspondent

A BREAKDOWN in proper accounting procedures for guns, drugs and ammunition among the 14,500 British troops sent to Bosnia could allow valuable weapons and ammunition to fall into the hands of criminals and rival militias, a National Audit Office report reveals today.

It discloses that the Ministry of Defence is urgently investigating what has happened to £4 million of ammunition stockpiled in a Bosnia base where there has been no stocktaking for 17 months.

Auditors sent to Bosnia by Parliament's financial watchdog found "there had been a breakdown in the controls over ammunition in particular" while computers had not been able to keep track of medical supplies and stores. Fears that large sums of hard currency could fall into the wrong hands had also led to a cut from £5 million to £2.5 million in the amount of German marks and US dollars held in cash to pay for services in Bosnia where the banking system had collapsed.

"Security precautions are vital where large amounts of cash are held or transported. This is particularly the case in Bosnia, where the Ministry of Defence are concerned about criminal activity and the availability of weapons."

There had been considerable concern that 452 Milan anti-tank missiles worth \$6 million could have gone missing. But after inquiries among the units, the missiles were found and accounting procedures were blamed.

Another inquiry founded that only 260 of 500 consignments of ammunition distributed to the troops had been properly received. In Croatia, vouchers authorising the issue of medical supplies, including morphine and codeine, were missing but another accounting error was blamed.

Other problems included severe difficulties in carrying out repairs to the various models of Land Rovers in use; and high prices paid for chartering ships to take the troops and supplies to Bosnia.

MoD: The Financial Management of the Military Operation in the former Yugoslavia; Report by the Comptroller and Auditor General; Stationery Office, £8.95.

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Warned: The Governor

THE Independent Television Commission issued a formal warning to Yorkshire Television over three scenes in the ITV prison drama shown in March. The female prison governor, played by Janet McPeck (right), was threatened with rape and having her fingers cut off, in what was subsequently shown to be a training exercise. The commission said it was unacceptable.



Warned: Silent Witness

THE Broadcasting Standards Council upheld a series of complaints about sex and violence in the BBC1 series, starring Amanda Burton (right) as a forensic pathologist, shown in February and March this year. Viewers were upset by graphic post-mortem scenes, but the BBC said most would have expected the programme to have been concerned with the physical consequences of violent death.



Bottomley's TV crackdown is dubbed 'just a political stunt'

BROADCASTERS yesterday accused Virginia Bottomley, the National Heritage Secretary, of seeking cheap political capital from her crackdown on television violence. Her high profile crusade against the prominence of violence in the schedules angered senior industry figures who claimed they had received insufficient credit for a big reduction over the past decade.

Her four-point plan was officially announced after she met the chairmen of the BBC, Independent Television Commission and Broadcasting Standards Council. The three bodies have agreed to: Ensure programme makers maintain proper standards and deal firmly with transgressions; Work together to educate viewers about their codes on

violence as well as quantity. 'Whitehall sources said her main concerns were not gritty soaps like EastEnders and Brookside, but 'psychodrama' crime shows such as Cracker and Silent Witness, which had an 'undue concentration on the darker and violent side of society.'

The BBC said it supported the initiative 'to ensure parents are kept well informed about the nature of programmes'. Sir George Russell, chairman of the commission, said: 'Our own research has consistently shown the vast majority of parents are aware of the watershed policy, but the BBC believes more can be done to improve parents' understanding of programme scheduling.'

V-chip 'not a solution'

THE Government yesterday urged more research into technology designed to shield children from violence on television. But neither Virginia Bottomley, the National Heritage Secretary, nor the main broadcasters believe the solution to curbing small screen violence lies in a 60p electronic V-chip (Violence-chip).

European Union to undertake more research, but a study published by her department yesterday revealed practical problems with the technology and devising a classification, and also questions of cost. Last year the film and video industry spent £2.5 million on having 3,625 films classified, but the Independent Television Commission said there were more than 300,000 hours of programmes a year on commercial TV alone — and digital broadcasting would cause a further proliferation.

Stephen Whittle, director of the Broadcasting Standards Council, said: 'The jury is still out on the V-chip. Clearly it can underpin consumer information... but it shifts all responsibility into the home and enables the broadcaster to abdicate responsibility.' He warned it could take 10 to 15 years for all sets to be fitted with chips. Development of the V-chip began in Canada after an emotional campaign by 18-year-old Virginia Lariviere, who collected 1.5 million signatures on a petition calling for zero tolerance of TV violence, after her younger sister was raped and murdered.

Labour reassures voters it will not abandon Britain's European veto

SENIOR shadow ministers yesterday moved to reassure voters that a Blair government will not abandon Britain's veto in the European Union as John Major struggled to turn the Euro-tide to Labour's disadvantage ahead of this week's Dublin summit. Tony Blair claimed yesterday at question time in the Commons that there was 'less clear water' between Mr Major and the Labour front bench than there is between the Prime Minister and his own Tory Euro-critics.

Mr Blair favoured a federal Europe. 'You are perfectly correct to say that when the House of Commons is not united on any issue it weakens any government's position in international negotiations,' he said. 'But what also undermines our national interest and our negotiating position in Europe is the fact that many of the socialist governments in Europe are expecting a very easy ride were there to be a Labour government. They believe a Labour government would make changes, surrender positions that this Government has held to — positions that if surrendered would be damaging to the UK.'

rency before the coming election believe Mr Major is on a winner when — as on BBC's On the Record last Sunday — he asks voters if they want inexperienced Labour ministers taking vital decisions in Amsterdam next June. 'Yesterday the shadow foreign secretary, Robin Cook, and Gordon Brown, the shadow chancellor, said in interviews that a future Labour government would not give up Britain's right to veto certain European legislation in sensitive areas. But on Radio 4's World at One Mr Cook conceded that if the EU is enlarged to become a Europe of 25 to 26 nation states, they could not all be admitted 'clutching their own vetoes.'

nation, obstructing progress. We want to see reform in the structural funds, and across areas of agriculture policy, and that will mean there will have to be some majority votes against those individual nations that stand in the way,' he said. Ian Traynor, adds from Bonn: 'The Home Secretary, Michael Howard, yesterday rejected calls for greater investigative powers for the European police agency. Chancellor Helmut Kohl and President Jacques Chirac of France on Monday proposed that Europe be given 'operational powers.' Following talks in Bonn Mr Howard said there was no question 'of Europe having powers to investigate crime or arrest people in member states.'

Soccer fans are given stick over return of celery throwing craze

AS A SYMBOL of a thriving football club, a pile of celery is perhaps less recognised than gleaming silverware. It is also less welcome. Fans of Gillingham, in Kent, are now being threatened with a life ban if they contribute to the pitchside vegetable patch which has highlighted several matches this season. Supporters entering the

Second Division club's Priestfield ground will also be subject to celery searches in an attempt to stamp out the latest outbreak of a football craze first recorded 10 years ago. Then Chelsea fans waved sticks of celery in the air while singing an obscene song about West Ham's hooligan Inter-City Firm, the Inter-Celery Firm, and the trend spread to other clubs, with police arresting some fans after deciding that celery could be classed

as an offensive weapon. Now Gillingham fans are performing the same song, but throw their sticks of celery toward the pitch at its climax. Piles of celery have been collected from behind the home goal after games. Five fans, aged 16 to 19, have been banned for one game after being caught on closed circuit television chucking celery. Ken Tappenden, the club's safety officer, said the move was made because

the song was beginning to pose a potential safety threat. 'We've still got 4,900 standing at the ground and I was beginning to see a lot of undue movement in the crowd as people were jumping around while singing this song. 'Then we began to see celery coming out of the middle of the crowd and on to the side of the pitch. We would get fined by the FA if it continued, so we had to take action.'

German socks sink UN man's asylum plea

ALAN TRAVIS Home Affairs Editor A KURD who has worked as a field officer for United Nations and British aid agencies in the safe haven of Suleimaniyah in northern Iraq is to be thrown out of Britain because he had new socks in his bag when he arrived at Heathrow last week. The man, now under a death sentence from Saddam Hussein for working with the UN, faces deportation after his asylum claim was rejected because immigration officials believe he came to Britain via Germany. He is not being named for his own protection. Their only evidence is a pair of G&A socks with a German price tag and a copy of the International Herald Tribune. Lawyers for the man — who is being held in Campfield immigration detention centre, near Oxford — insist he has not been to Germany, and came to Britain from Turkey, where the socks were a present from a well-wisher. They say the newspaper was bought at Heathrow.

The Home Office letter rejecting his application on the grounds that he came via a 'safe third country' states: 'Iraq is not the only country to which you can be removed. You arrived from Germany where you had sufficient time to buy a newspaper and some socks. The Home Secretary is satisfied you had the opportunity to claim asylum in Germany.' It gives no other reason for turning him away. His lawyer, Lily Hazami, said: 'These are very flimsy grounds. He has worked for the past five years for the UN, for the British aid agency Care International and for the World Food Programme. He fled from Iraq as a result of the political situation in August. He has been in Turkey since then waiting for an opportunity to escape.' The Home Office has now been supplied with documentation backing his claims to have worked with the UN for the past five years. Ms Hazami said the 31-year-old married man had a cousin in Britain and wanted to come to here because of the United Kingdom's active role in the Kurdish safe haven in northern Iraq before it was

invaded by Iraqi troops. A letter from the UN deputy co-ordinator for northern Iraq, Robin Medforth-Mills, which has been seen by the Guardian, testifies that the man has 'been a valued contributor to the humanitarian programmes during the past five years'. He says he worked at a senior level with the UN High Commission for Refugees, and also with Care International and the UN Iraq Relief Co-ordination Unit. Testimony from Stafford Clarry, the UN field delegate, says the man has faced serious threatening situations while carrying out his duties. A Home Office spokesman said he faces deportation on Friday because 'there is transitory evidence that [he] has transited a safe third country en route to the UK. The UK immigration authorities will seek to return that person to the safe third country through which there is evidence that he has travelled through in the first instance.' Last night, after inquiries by the Guardian, the Home Office said it would now consider the Kurdish man's 'substantive case', and would release him from detention.

Hogg will barcode all cattle to combat BSE

PAUL BROWN Environment Correspondent A NEW computer system to barcode every cow and bull in Britain to keep track of their movements is to be introduced by the Government to convince the Europeans and the home consumer that beef is safe. The system will cost £5 million to set up and £25 million a year to run, with the annual costs being paid for by the farming industry. Each farmer will have to pay up to £300 a year in fees. Next week, the Agriculture Minister, Douglas Hogg, is expected to announce an additional, selective cull of cattle in a bid to eradicate BSE earlier. Once the accelerated cull is under way, the Government is expected to claim it has done all it can to ensure that British beef is safe so the beef export ban can be lifted. Announcing the computer programme yesterday, Mr Hogg said: 'Renewing consumer confidence in British beef is vital, here and abroad. Knowing exactly where animals are born, and where they go is crucial to that process. It is in the farming industry's interests to embrace this scheme wholeheartedly.' The privately-run computer system will give each cow in Britain a barcode. The farmer will have a series of farms on postcards with barcode stickers to send in everytime a cow is moved, sent to market or abattoir. The problem for the farmer is that the EU is still considering its own proposals for a Europe-wide cattle register and the British system must dovetail or there will be confusion. The consultation period on the scheme ends January 31.

Number of refugees detained has tripled

ALAN TRAVIS Home Affairs Editor THE number of asylum seekers detained in Britain has more than tripled in the last three years with 650 held on any one day, according to an Amnesty International report published today. The Amnesty survey of 160 asylum cases also shows that the cost of holding these detainees has reached £20 mil-

lion a year and the Home Office is repeatedly violating international human rights treaties against arbitrary arrest and detention. The international human rights charity also says that British ministers have consistently misled Parliament by claiming that asylum seekers are normally held in detention only after their applications have been refused. The Amnesty report, Cell Culture, says that the num-

bers being held has more than tripled from the 1993 figure of 250 a day after the opening of privately-run detention facilities at Oxford and Gatwick airport and a specialist prison at Rochester, Kent. Increased use of detention followed repeated tightening of the asylum laws. Cell Culture, Amnesty International, 96-110 Rosebery Avenue, London EC1 4RE. £4.50.

The Guardian International & The Observer Travel Bag advertisement. Includes an image of a travel bag and a form to order the bag for £50.00. The form asks for name, address, postcode, country, and payment details (cheque or Visa/Mastercard).

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Kathy Evans in Doha talks to the woman emerging from the twilight zone into a role in public life as part of the Gulf's first royal team

'First lady' of Arabia opens door for women

A WIFE of the Gulf's youngest ruler is taking the first tentative steps towards a role in public life, after centuries in which such women have been, officially, almost non-existent.

The royal purdah is about to be broken by Sheikha Moza bint Nasser al-Misned, who is married to the Qatari emir, Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa al-Thani.

At the moment, she can best be described as being in the twilight zone of public life. The sheikha, who is in her thirties, has not yet appeared on television and still forbids photographs. On the other hand, she has just made her Gulf debut, in a landmark visit to the United States.

Travelling with a group of

Qatari women graduates, she had meetings with a number of officials, including former president George Bush, former secretary of state James Baker and the Republican Speaker Newt Gingrich.

Travelling unaccompanied by a close male relative, and having public meetings with men, is unprecedented for the spouse of a Gulf ruler. Women royals of Arabia rarely have contact with men apart from members of their own family.

Although not on state business officially, Sheikha Moza was investigating the possibility of establishing an American university for the educational foundation she has formed in Qatar. Such a university would have national importance to the emirate.

Since becoming the emirate's first lady, she has cut a figure sharply in contrast with many other wives of rulers on the Arabian peninsula. She has a BSc in sociology

'A lot of women now need to work to help their families'

from Qatar university, speaks fluent English and works out four times a week. Her status among the emir's three wives — she is the second and youngest — was recently reconfirmed by the appointment of her son Jassem, aged 18, as the crown prince.

She is also a beauty. Tall and willowy, with black eyes and hair, Sheikha Moza cuts a new style among the Gulf royals, known for their over-dressing. For her first interview with a British journalist, she wore a simple full-length Armani suit in muted grey-blue tones, a white blouse and three-inch heels.

"Times are changing. The subject of women is no longer taboo," she said. "God created us to be equal and there is no reason why they shouldn't share the same work as men."

Sheikha Moza's emergence coincides with growing confusion in the Gulf about the role and identity of women. Although guaranteed an education, many are pushing for an end to segregation in offices and restrictions on certain careers in some states. With

recent austerity measures, a number of women also find that they need to work.

Others still prefer the Gulf stereotype of endless shopping sprees or seclusion at home.

Local television provides no guidance or role models. Women are either singers wearing slit dresses and heavy doses of lip gloss, or appear as subservient wives and mothers in soap operas. "The image on television is not correct. We have a lot of women now who need to work to help their families and this is not being reflected. First, the women of the Gulf have to identify our goals. We have to learn our capabilities and believe in ourselves. Once we do that, we can achieve anything," said Sheikha Moza.

Western-style feminism was not suitable for the Gulf, she added. "I don't want our women to fall into the trap of foreign concepts. It is against our culture that women live

'Change has to come gradually and naturally to avoid a reaction'

independently and separately from their families," she said. "Change also has to come gradually and naturally to avoid a reaction."

Sheikha Moza's emergence has been possible only because of her husband. The sheikha, aged 46, is first of the

Gulf leaders to have been born in the post-oil generation and, since coming to power 18 months ago, has encouraged open political debate on previously taboo subjects. Gulf rulers have reacted uncomfortably to his new style of leadership.

The sheikha's activities could prove even more worrying to them. Next year, she is planning to hold the region's first convention of Gulf women to discuss their role in the workplace and the family. Speakers will include leading women academics from the US and Britain, public figures and representatives of women's groups around the Gulf.

Asked if the convention would discuss controversial subjects, such as the right to drive, work and travel freely, Sheikha Moza replied: "Issues may emerge which are controversial, but this is normal, isn't it? I hope to create good waves."

At home, many Qatari and diplomats are wondering whether the emirate is witnessing the emergence of the Gulf's first "royal team". She and her husband talk affectionately about each other (unheard of in the Gulf) and Sheikha Moza frequently refers to "we" in talking about the government's priorities.

Since becoming first lady, she has established a foundation for science education and social development, which works with the mentally handicapped. It led her to have frequent contacts with male doctors and academics. "I see them when it is necessary," she said.

Israel approves 132 homes in Arab Jerusalem

Styram Bhatia in Jerusalem

I SRAELI city planners in Jerusalem yesterday approved 132 Jewish homes being built in the centre of an Arab neighbourhood.

Palestinians, including several of Yasser Arafat's officials, warned last night that the plan would unleash a wave of violence reminiscent of the bloody clashes which followed the opening of an archaeological tunnel near the al-Aqsa mosque in September.

The Jewish enclave, which will be partly financed by an American millionaire, Irving Moskowitz, is to be built in the Ras al-Amoud neighbourhood in Arab east Jerusalem.

Israel's minister of interior, Eliyahu Sulassa, announced the decision and defended the right of Jews to live in any part of Jerusalem. But he added: "We will also build homes for Arabs. There is no reason why the Arabs should react angrily."

A special committee set up by the interior ministry had delayed implementing the plan for several years. Earlier this week, it heard objections from Arab landowners who compared the decision to opening a discotheque in the heart of an ultra-orthodox Jewish neighbourhood.

Nuha Elghoul, a Palestinian headmistress who lives in Ras al-Amoud, said the Israeli government was making "a

big mistake" by allowing Jews to settle among more than 15,000 Arabs.

"This is discrimination," she said. "On the one hand, they prevent the Arabs from building homes, but on the other they allow Jews to build freely in Arab Jerusalem."

The Palestinian minister for Jerusalem affairs, Faisal Hussain, sharply criticised the scheme and said it was part of Israel's unrelenting effort to Judaise Arab Jerusalem, where more than 160,000 Jews have settled since the 1967 Middle East war.

The speaker of the Palestinian legislative council, Ahmed Qureia, warned: "This is an attempt to kill the peace process. It is very dangerous and Israel should expect a reaction."

Israel's Peace Now movement also feared that the decision would lead to renewed violence.

The Palestinians also accuse Israel of finding ways to drive out Jerusalem's 150,000 Arab residents: hundreds of families recently lost their right to remain in the city because Israel claimed they had chosen to live outside Jerusalem's boundaries.

Arab women from Jerusalem who married foreign nationals have also been told their residence rights have been cancelled. This affects several thousand women who have married men from the West Bank or Palestinian men living in Jordan.



Palestinian demonstrators pray in front of a bulldozer yesterday after they stopped it being used by Jewish settlers trying to claim land in the Jordan Valley PHOTOGRAPH: RULA HALAWANI

Bolger remakes NZ coalition

Gilroy Wilson in Wellington

AFTER two months of post-electoral manoeuvring New Zealand's National Party prime minister, Jim Bolger, has formed a coalition with the nationalist New Zealand First, depriving the Labour leader Helen Clark of the opportunity of becoming the country's first woman prime minister.

But the stability of the partnership with NZF's Maori leader Winston Peters — a one-time National cabinet minister and for three years a fierce opponent of his former party — must be in doubt.

It was Mr Peters who announced yesterday that the conservative National Party had beaten Labour for his support in forming a coalition — a remarkable volte face for the man who campaigned on the promise that a vote for him would put Mr Bolger and his finance minister, Bill Birch, out of office.

Now he is to be Mr Bolger's number two as deputy prime minister and treasurer — the latter a new and so far undefined post, although Mr Bolger said yesterday that the budget would be in Mr Peters' hands.

Mr Bolger played down past acrimony between Mr Peters and himself, accepting that journalists would recall the insults which the two have

traded but saying that it would be "irrelevant".

The agreement puts Mr Peters at risk of losing the support of Maori voters, who ended a 60-year association with Labour to back him. Many may be seen propping up a National government.

Mr Peters is widely thought to have chosen National because he reckons that the social policy concessions he was able to gain from it will be more attractive at the next election than anything he could achieve in coalition with Labour.

The concessions include the promise of higher spending on health, education, law and order, and pensions. If these can be delivered without damage to the economy, NZF will be in a good position to make gains at the next election — providing that it has not irreparably splintered by then.

Mr Peters announced his decision at a press conference without even telling Mr Bolger what he and his MPs had decided. He claimed that there was "massive consensus" for joining forces with National.

An angry Helen Clark said: "It's not only a major disappointment for us, it's a major disappointment for New Zealanders who voted for a government of change. Many will see it as a betrayal."

Computer firm ordered to pay \$6m for wrist injuries

San Katz in New York

A JURY in Brooklyn has ordered the computer manufacturer Digital Equipment to pay \$6 million (\$3.75 million) in damages to three office workers who claimed that they had suffered repetitive stress injury as a result of using the company's keyboards.

The case was hailed yesterday as a legal landmark. The women's lawyer, Steven Phillips, said it was the first such claim to succeed in court.

"We've settled cases before and we've tried cases that have lost," he said. He told the court Digital knew some of its keyboards could cause a form of repetitive stress injury (RSI) known as carpal tunnel syndrome but did nothing to help its customers minimize the risk to their employers.

Digital said in a statement that there was no scientific evidence that keyboards caused injuries of the kind suffered by the three women, and said it would seek to have the decision overruled.

Carpal tunnel syndrome is a condition in which tissue in the wrist becomes inflamed and exerts pressure on nerves. Victims suffer from chronic pain and may ultimately lose the use of their hands.

Patricia Geresty, aged 50, a secretary and the most severely injured of the women, has had four operations since she began suffering from the condition. The jury awarded her almost \$5.4 million.

Jill Jackson, aged 42, a legal secretary whose elbow was affected, was awarded \$366,000. The third woman, a hospital billing clerk, received \$278,000.

The jury appears to have been swayed by evidence that Digital operated its own in-house programme to prevent RSI, but made no attempt to warn other employers of the dangers it had recognised.

"They knew how to fix the problem and they kept quiet so they could sell their equipment," Mr Phillips said.

Employers in the United States pay out \$60 billion a year in compensation to employees suffering from RSI, but until now no computer company has been held liable for injuries caused by using its machines.

In other cases this year juries absolved IBM of any responsibility for injuries suffered by workers using its machines.

Legal experts warned yesterday that the Digital judgment could prove to be "an aberration".

Saddam fails to hit right button to satisfy West

David Hirst in Beirut reports on a day of propaganda, theatre and confusion as Iraq switches the oil back on

PRESIDENT Saddam Hussein braved driving rain yesterday to preside over celebrations to mark Iraq's long-awaited "return to the world oil market".

But it appears that when he threw the switch that should have set the oil flowing for the first time in six years, nothing happened.

Reports said this embarrassing setback, kept hidden from the Iraqi people, was caused by an untimely power failure in the oil-producing region of Kirkuk, 160 miles north of Baghdad.

But in New York, sources at the United Nations said that Iraq had aborted the pumping operation because it realised it had jumped the gun on starting the flow before the UN had approved any contracts for delivery of oil.

They disputed reports that the oil flow was interrupted because of a technical fault on the pipeline.

President Saddam switched on the pipeline at 11.25am, after arriving unexpectedly at an outdoor ceremony in Kirkuk marking what Iraq's official news agency said was the "return of Iraqi oil to world markets".

His appearance in military fatigues with senior government officials, led to carefully-staged jubilation among hundreds of Iraqi citizens.

Official media reports on the president's arrival froze currency dealings amid expectations that the news would significantly strengthen the dinar and cut food prices. But no reports appeared locally on the hitch in oil pumping.

Under the "oil-for-food" deal, Iraq can export \$2 billion (\$1.25 billion) of oil every six months; half the

proceeds will go on food, medicine and humanitarian assistance.

The Iraqi government will buy the food, which will then be distributed under UN supervision throughout Iraq and in the Western-protected Kurdish north.

The pumping of Iraqi oil has been dogged by delays, caused mainly by US-Iraqi

disputes over the interpretation of the UN-sponsored agreement, and by US anger at President Saddam's military incursion into Kurdistan in September.

A diplomat in Baghdad said the Iraqi people "will conclude that there is a beginning of a change only when the first truckloads of food actually arrive". That could take up to three months.

But for the regime, at least, yesterday was to have been an occasion for rejoicing. The president clearly intended to make the most of it — he now rarely leaves his palaces.

The morning newspapers had set the reverent and jubilant tone. "Yes to Saddam

Hussein, who broke the sanctions and set Iraq's oil free," said al-Jumhuriyah. "The people's beloved one said it ... prosperity is on the way," said al-Qadisiya.

The deal promises to ease the people's increasingly desperate plight. But for the regime it is more than that. For the past two weeks, officials have been confidently forecasting that the deal is a prelude to the lifting of UN sanctions.

The president's plan to preside over the switching-on ceremony had not been announced in advance. The official news agency, announcing the visit in a four-line urgent report from the ceremony, said he had "pressed the button in Kirkuk's Number One pumping station at 11.25am, declaring the return of Iraqi oil to world markets".

At first it appeared that the president's late arrival had caused a delay in starting the pumps, but later in the day, at Ceyhan, 600 miles away on the Mediterranean, officials of the Turkish oil company Botas said there was no sign of the oil. They attributed this to a power failure in Kirkuk. The official Iraqi media breathed no word of the problem, and journalists taken to Kirkuk were not informed.

The pumping failure did not stop popular festivities — dancing and folk-song — from going ahead. But, curiously, there were no accounts of President Saddam appearing before his grateful and joyous people.

Britain is furious over the US decision to withdraw 4,000 mostly Kurdish American-based or financed charities in northern Iraq, arguing that this sends the wrong message to President Saddam about the West's commitment to protect the Kurdish area, *San Black in London reports.*

The US evacuation is also certain to affect the UN's food distribution plans now getting under way.

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Research shows that charitable giving by the very wealthy is directly tied to the tax rate. The dominant urge seems to give it to charity rather than let the government get hold of it.
Charles Nevin
G2 page 4

صلى الله عليه وسلم

Historic moment for rainbow state

Mandela seals the new South Africa

Ruarich Nicol in Sharpeville

NELSON MANDELA put South Africa on firm foundations yesterday when he signed the new constitution into existence on the historic and sun-soaked earth of Sharpeville.

It marked the end of six tough years of negotiations.

"It's the end of 344 years of struggle for national unity and lasting peace," said Cyril Ramaphosa, chairman of the constitutional assembly, as he passed the 150-page black-bound document to his president.

"We solemnly honour the pledge we made to ourselves and to the world, that South Africa shall redeem herself and thereby widen the frontiers of human freedom," Mr Mandela said, pausing while six military helicopters, trailing the South African flag, flew past.

The constitution is based on a bill of rights which upholds an array of entitlements. It is an extraordinary creation, guaranteeing gay rights and coming close to outlawing censorship. But it has contentious passages. There were mumbled about its disdain for federalism, but these died down after the constitutional court ordered Mr Ramaphosa's assembly to redraft the document earlier this year.

Once into his address, Mr Mandela departed from the text prepared by those he refers to as his "bosses" and began to speak from the heart. He said South Africa must be controlled by South Africans and he went on to talk of his "unshakable determination that respect for human life and liberty be enshrined as right and beyond any power to diminish."

His audience had streamed into the George Thabane football stadium in Sharpeville, past the guns of soldiers brought in to ensure the peace.

Once on the terraces, they quickly framed the pitch with brightly coloured umbrellas to escape the intense sun.

'It's the end of 344 years of struggle for national unity and lasting peace'

Cyril Ramaphosa

'We solemnly honour the pledge we made to ourselves and to the world, that South Africa shall redeem herself and thereby widen the frontiers of freedom'

'We will redeem the faith which fired those whose blood drenched the soil of Sharpeville and elsewhere in our country and beyond'

Nelson Mandela

Mr Mandela was joined on stage by many of the country's leaders, although the National Party's F. W. de Klerk was absent. The signing was watched by a group who survived the 1990 Sharpeville massacre, in which 69 people died.

The slaughter — which turned the eyes of the world on apartheid — provided the backdrop to the ceremony.

Earlier yesterday Mr Mandela spent hours at the site of the shooting, where he unveiled a plaque. It said: "Those who gave their lives for a free and just South Africa."

After signing the constitution, Mr Mandela called on South Africans to pay tribute to the victims of apartheid by moving jointly towards peace.

"We will redeem the faith which fired those whose blood drenched the soil of Sharpeville and elsewhere in our country and beyond," he said.

"Today we humbly pay tribute to them in a special way. This is a monument to their heroism."

The British received a special mention. Sharpeville is part of Vereeniging where, on May 31 1960, the British and the Boers signed a treaty which led to the Union of South Africa, thereby disenfranchising the black population for 89 years.

"Today we reclaim the unity that the Vereeniging of nine decades ago sought to deny," Mr Mandela said.

"We give life to our nation's prayer for freedom regained and a continent reborn."

There were many who echoed that sentiment as the crowd watched their political leaders drive away.



Nelson Mandela signs the new constitution into law yesterday, watched by Cyril Ramaphosa, chairman of the constitutional assembly. The ceremony was held in Sharpeville, where 69 people were massacred in 1960

Greek farmers dig in for a fight to the finish

Helena Smith in Athens

GREEK farmers who have left the country in chaos with their fortnight-long rail and road blockade rejected a government olive branch last night and dug in for indefinite warfare.

An emergency cabinet meeting failed to resolve the worst revolt in modern Greek history but announced that the prime minister, Costas Simitis, was willing to negotiate.

Mr Simitis insisted, however, that the farmers demand for billions of drachmas could not be met.

The farmers complain that the government's budget, designed to meet the European Union criteria for a single currency, is too stringent.

In a nationally televised address, Mr Simitis promised to sit down with the farmers and talk if they first removed the 100-plus blockades they have erected across the main and secondary roads and railways.

But the farmers, meeting at their headquarters in Larissa, immediately rejected the offer, described it as a "provocation" and vowed to continue the blockade "until the bitter end".

"The government has done nothing to meet our demands, and therefore we will not be withdrawing," said a statement by Thanassis Nasikas, a leading member of the farmers' committee.

"Our decision is that we will continue our struggle and call on more farmers to reinforce our blockades. The premier hasn't figured out what's happening here."

As he spoke farmers were reported to be blocking the harbour of Agios Nikolaos, about 125 miles west of Athens, to prevent lorries reaching the capital by sea from the nearby cut-off southern port of Patras.

Many of the farmers have described the blockade as a "holy war" they will fight to the end.

Innumerable lorries, including hundreds from Britain, have been trapped by the barricades, which have cut the country in half and sealed its international borders.

"I understand the problems of those working in the agricultural sector, who Pasok [the governing Socialist Party] has always supported, and the government is willing to discuss them," Mr Simitis said.

"But demands for billions [of drachmas] cannot be satisfied. To do so would be a step backwards. It would mean we would miss the targets we have set to enable Greece to play a role in the European Union."

The blockade has shut scores of northern factories and left many towns and cities short of food.

Yesterday the lorry drivers' union pleaded with the farmers to lift the siege, saying that thousands of foreign truckers were suffering severe hardship and had reached the point of despair.

With Greece braced for a barrage of public service strikes in the next 10 days, also in protest at the austerity programme, Mr Simitis avoided saying how he would lift the blockade if the farmers rejected his offer.

He has said he would rather his government fell than give into the farmers' demands.

Mr Nasikas said the farmers could mobilise thousands more to join the battle against the government's "criminal European Union budget" if they wanted to.

Embryonic euro may be born into broken home

Ian Traynor in Bonn

reports that the monetary union partnership looks like coming unstuck

THE monetary marriage between France and Germany which was expected to produce a baby euro at the beginning of 1999 suddenly looks to be on the rocks.

After a year of wrangling over the terms of economic and monetary union and how the single currency will be run after its launch, the crunch could come tomorrow evening in Dublin when European Union finance ministers meet to thrash out a deal.

They will be trying to balance Germany's insistence on iron-clad fiscal discipline with French-led demands for a more relaxed regime and greater political leeway in setting monetary, fiscal and economic policy.

The two sides failed to bridge their differences at a Franco-German summit in Bavaria on Monday. President Jacques Chirac of France took a public potshot at the German financial elite by stressing that the independence of the future European central bank had to be matched by a political counterweight.

In short, he argued that France and most other EU countries did not want the single currency run the way Germany, through its powerful and constitutionally independent Bundesbank, runs the mark.

But Bonn, reluctant anyway to sacrifice the mark and not prepared to take chances, will only adopt the euro if it is governed by Bundesbank-style rigour.

Germany is therefore insisting on a stability pact, which would define limits on deficit spending, automatically fine single-currency members who breach the limits, and specify when exceptions could be made. As many of these powers as possible would be in the hands of the European central bankers.

Paris counters that such decisions are essentially political and should be taken by democratically accountable politicians.

The Germans shudder at the "politicisation" of monetary policy, fearing it would result in horse-trading among EMU governments, thereby jeopardising monetary stability and a weakening of the euro.

A fundamental divergence of views on the nature and role of the central bank is being fed by the two countries' different historical cultures, experiences and attitudes.

Senior German officials, fed up with being accused of dictating the terms of the single currency, point out that France came up with EMU as a way of harnessing the strength of the mark while diluting the Bundesbank's influence in the wake of German reunification.

The French hope EMU can destroy the power of the Bundesbank; the Germans will only accept EMU if it is under a bigger and better Bundesbank.

Hans Tietmeyer, the Bundesbank's chief, is becoming the project's pet bogeyman. This week in the German magazine Der Spiegel, a leading French academic lambasted him as a "medieval high priest", and told Germans their dogmatic devotion to monetary stability had become a national religion.

National religion is rooted in the disasters of the 1920s and 1930s when wheelbarrow inflation destroyed the national currency, wiped out savings and paved the way for the rise of the Nazis.

The Bavarian state minister, Edmund Stoiber, who is the nearest Germany has to a powerful Eurosceptic, is already playing on these fears by insisting that Germany cannot relax its EMU conditions.

Any loosening of the stability pact, he warned on Monday, would leave the European currency less stable than the mark.

"That means inflation, higher interest rates, more unemployment, loss of value," he said. Such talk alarms Germans.

But why, the French implicitly ask, should Germany's fears about the return of the Weimar Republic force us to yoke our economic policy-making to such discipline.

The Germans, although relatively isolated, are not giving in. Theo Waigel, the finance minister and architect of the stability pact, said Bonn was in no hurry for a deal in Dublin and that the stability pact could wait until next year.

His hardline deputy, Jürgen Stark, has threatened to boycott the stability pact negotiations if Bonn cannot have its way. He will wait till EMU is launched and then seek his revenge with other EMU member states.

There may be a fringe in Dublin, but the argument will not be over: both sides will invoke "the spirit of the Maastricht treaty" in their support. If you could bottle that spirit and sell it, you would soon be a euro-millionaire.

China anoints paradox as powerbroker and pawn

Andrew Higgins concludes his series on Hong Kong with a profile of the man China will put in charge of the former colony

SOON after arriving in Hong Kong in 1983, the man appointed by Deng Xiaoping as China's plenipotentiary in the colony made a less than dazzling discovery.

"I began to realise that the political inclinations of businessmen are usually linked to their business. They lean towards whoever supports them in trade or finance," recalls Xu Jian, China's senior official here until 1990. "I suggested that we use our resources to foster a group of pro-China capitalists."

The theory was quickly put into practice. In 1988, China stepped in with \$120 million (875 million) to help build out the shipping empire of a Hong Kong family previously far more partial, at least in public, to Taiwan and Princess Grace of Monaco than the cadres of the Chinese Communist Party.

Today, 11 years after Beijing helped set up the world's third biggest corporate bailout (after Chrysler and Lockheed), the businessman saved from bankruptcy will be named as Chris Patten's successor, the first post-colonial chief executive of Hong Kong.

Tung Chee-hwa, or C.H. as he is often called, is 59, a fan of Confucius who sends his children to university in America, a Chinese patriot who left China, a man whose given name means "build China" but who used to cheer on Liverpool Football Club from the Kop. This morning he will become the pro-China capitalist the Communist Party chooses to run Hong Kong.

"He owes China a big favour, but so do many businessmen," said David Chu, a property millionaire who met Mr Tung when they worked together at a General Electric plant near Boston in 1968.

He sees Mr Tung's intimate connection with China as an asset not a handicap. He knows how to communicate with Chinese leaders. They have a different set of values. Almost like alien beings."

In the weeks preceding his confirmation this morning by a carefully screened 400-member selection committee, Mr Tung has spoken Beijing's language. He emerged from relative obscurity to toe China's line with a consistency and vigour that has alarmed

critics and surprised even some veteran pro-China politicians.

He told the democrats that they must change, warned Tibet support groups to pack their bags, echoed Chinese conspiracy theories about "hostile foreign forces", and declined to join those demanding leniency for the Hong Kong journalist Xi Yang, who was jailed for 12 years in China for an interest-free scoop.

"He is going to do what he is told. He is going to be very tough and he will obey orders," said Emily Lau, a democrat member of the legislative council.

"The things he has been saying in the past few weeks show us that he is through and through a Communist cadre."

Most of Hong Kong prefers to see a classic conservative, a view Mr Tung has excoriated by paying homage to Confucius at a Hong Kong temple and praising traditional values in an 18-page "election" manifesto. An official who knows him suggests that he wants to be "a Hong Kong Lee Kuan-yew" — Singapore's stern, paternalistic elder statesman.

But Mr Tung also has considerable leniency for the immigration, even in Beijing, and uses a BMW in a city with more Rolls Royces per capita than any other — though the car does carry the less than princely badge of the Corps Consulatus, an emblem of his role as honorary consul for Monaco.

A graduate of Liverpool University in marine engineering, he was a regular at Anfield. Last year he watched Liverpool lose to Manchester United at Wembley in the Cup final. He also took to American football during nearly 10 years working in the United States.

Despite his years in Liverpool, San Francisco, Boston and the hybrid east-west city of Hong Kong, he champions the values of the country he left at the age of 12, when his father, C. Y. Tung, the founder of the family shipping fortune, fled Shanghai for Hong Kong just before Mao Zedong's revolution.

for the Betterment of Hong Kong. "He is the only one who, in the eyes of Chinese officials, has not done anything wrong or said anything inappropriate."

But are these the talents needed to preserve the "high degree of autonomy" promised to Hong Kong after July 1 under the formula of "one country, two systems"?

Mr Tung's only experience in government was a four-year stint on Mr Patten's executive council, where he opposed political and most other reforms. Some even challenge his reputation in business, questioning a carefully constructed orthodoxy that he rescued the family shipping empire from his father's excesses.

"The father died in April 1982. The problems did not emerge until 1986 after the sons decided to buy 30 new ships. This is not the father's folly. Things started to go wrong when C.H. and his brother took over," said Stephen Kentwell, an Australian shipping expert who has written a study of the Tung family firm.

But it was the near-collapse of the firm, with more than \$2.5 billion of debt in September 1985, that helped launch Mr Tung's political career. It brought him into the orbit — and trust — of Beijing business interests and officials.

China's role in the bail-out was not formally acknowledged by Mr Tung until two months ago, a revelation attributed to the family's ties to Taiwan. The subject remains sensitive and rarely elicits more than brief answers.

Mr Tung told the South China Morning Post: "If you are trying to get me to suggest I am going to be so grateful [to China], that I will not be looking after Hong Kong people's interests, you know what the answer is."

Those seeking details are told to consult Henry Fok, a shadowy Hong Kong tycoon who acted as the front man for the Chinese rescue operation. Mr Fok, who allegedly made his initial fortune from busting sanctions against China during the Korean War, never gives interviews.

Bankers involved in the rescue plan, which took nearly two years to put together, praise Mr Tung's powers of persuasion and tenacity. But the secrecy surrounding it remains a cause for concern.

"Why would the Communists lend so much money to the Tung family?" asked Ms Lau. "What is it between the father and the son? I don't think we ever know. But that is a clear signal they know the family very well and trust them. The relationship between this family and the Chinese Communist Party is very deep."

Nato takes tough line with Russia on new members

NATO warned Russia yesterday that it will start admitting new members from central Europe next year whether or not Russia agrees to forge a privileged partnership with the alliance, writes John Palmer in Brussels.

The Nato declaration that its enlargement strategy is now irreversible came as the Russian government restated its opposition to eastward expansion by the alliance.

Before meeting the Russian foreign minister, Yevgeny Primakov, in Brussels today, Nato foreign ministers agreed a new summit in Madrid next July would decide which countries should be selected to join first. "This summit will take truly historic decisions which will shape Nato for the 21st century," Javier Solana, the secretary general, said last night.

But in an attempt to make Nato enlargement more palatable to Moscow, Nato said it had "no intention, no plan and no need to station nuclear weapons on the territory of any new members". It is also expected to reassure Mr Primakov that it has no plans for the permanent stationing of foreign troops on the soil of the first new members, widely tipped to be Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovenia.

The Madrid summit is intended to tackle three broad issues which will help share European security well into the next century. It will agree on who should be in the first

wave of new members, it will finalise its military reorganisation to give a much bigger role to its European members and it will also conclude a new Atlantic Partnership Council, designed to link Nato with 40 other countries in western and eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

Nato also wants to conclude a privileged relationship with both Russia and Ukraine which might include joint action to tackle international crime, nuclear non-proliferation and future peacekeeping missions similar to that in Bosnia.

But although Nato is ready to finalise a legal treaty or charter with Russia, it insists that Moscow will not be given any veto on the future of the Atlantic alliance. "There were suggestions that the enlargement of Nato should be made conditional on a new agreement with Russia, but that was not acceptable to Nato," Malcolm Rifkind, the Foreign Secretary, said in Brussels. "To accept that would be to accept an external veto over Nato."

Rifkind pointed out that they also seek membership of the European Union.

"Membership of the EU also carries security implications for the Baltic states," he said.

France played down its differences yesterday with the United States on Nato reorganisation, saying its demands that the alliance's European regional commands be put under European officers had been misunderstood. Hervé de Charette, the foreign minister, said France was not asking for the command of Nato's vital southern flank, nor did it want the US Sixth Fleet in the Mediterranean to come under foreign command.

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A fatal obsession

Europe is being debated by a narrow elite

TO LISTEN to Teresa Gorman MP in the House of Commons at Question Time yesterday you would think that Europe was now the sole topic in every bar and home in the land. Mrs Gorman and her Conservative Eurosceptic supporters always behave as though the country is bursting to end Britain's membership of the European Union. Yesterday, the Billericay MP nastily told the Prime Minister that "the honest way" to deal with this pent-up wave of opinion was to hold an immediate referendum on Europe. She now intends to force the referendum issue on to the floor of the House in the New Year, though her private member's bill has not a hope of passing into law.

People like Mrs Gorman are in the grip of an obsession. They believe that they speak for the seething mass of British people. That belief is partly what lies behind the two-day debate on Europe which opens in the House of Commons today. This debate is taking place because the Eurosceptics believe that the Government — and the Chancellor in particular — is trying to sell out British sovereignty in the run-up to the European summit in Dublin on Friday. They want to use these two days to tie Mr Clarke and Mr Major's hands. They genuinely believe that they are engaged in a crusade which is being cheered on by the British — and more specifically the English — people.

Isn't it odd, therefore, that this week's big opportunity to test the temperature over Europe is being absolutely neglected by all wings of the Conservative Party and by most of the political class as well? If there genuinely was a popular debate about Europe in this country — as the Eurosceptics and the right-wing tabloid press try to pretend — then all eyes would be focused on Merseyside West, where there is a European Parliament by-election tomorrow, caused by the death of the sitting

Labour member. In a logical world, here would be a perfectly timed opportunity to listen to the people. If the Eurosceptics were right, such a contest could put real pressure on the Government over Europe. What could be better than a European by-election on the eve of a European summit to force ministers to take notice of the popular will?

And yet, of course, the debate about Europe in Merseyside West is not seething at all. There is more debate in the average Trappist monastery than there is in this by-election. The majority of people are wholly unaware that it is even taking place. They will do exceptionally well in Merseyside West if they manage a turnout of 20 per cent tomorrow. The result, what is more, is an absolute foregone conclusion. Labour will retain the seat by a large majority, while you will need strong binoculars to spot the Tory vote at all.

This is not intended to be a cheap jibe. It is intended to point up the genuine disjunction between the world as politicians like to imagine it and the world as it actually exists. This country ought to be having a healthy and informed debate about its place in Europe. But the debate that is taking place is anything but that. It is a debate among a narrow elite, conducted in narrow terms and almost wholly unrelated to the world as most people experience it. If public opinion was really as aroused as Mrs Gorman pretends, then this pre-Dublin week would see a powerful convergence between what happens in the Commons and what happens in Merseyside West. In the real world, though, the two are diverging rather than converging. Mr Major's riposte to Mrs Gorman, that there should be a reasoned debate based on facts not scares, was admirable but naive. If it doesn't happen in the Commons, then why should it happen in Merseyside West?

Unnecessary and unwanted

Violence on TV is already being cut without ministerial help

VIRGINIA BOTTOMLEY wants to tackle violence. Good for her. There are innumerable ways our civilisation could reduce its aggression and destructiveness. The causes of violence are deep and complex — as psychologists have demonstrated — but some of its most fundamental impulses can be tackled: drink, poor parenting, family breakdown, poor communication skills, poverty and inequality. They all pose challenges to a Conservative minister: ranging from drink because of the donations the minister's party receives from the industry to inequality which would require the Government to return to the redistributive policies it abandoned 17 years ago. Yet the potential for progress on these fronts is huge: more conciliation and mediation services would reduce the aggression in marriage and divorce; more funds for the mushrooming agencies promoting parenting skills might really achieve a breakthrough on family life; tackling the threefold increase in children living in poverty since 1979 would have much wider benefits than just reducing violence. But Virginia Bottomley is not concerned with any of these issues. She ignored them as Minister for the Family and now, as Heritage Secretary, she can only concentrate on something much less fundamental: violence on television.

Her intervention yesterday in the debate on violence was cheap in two ways — first, in respect of it not costing the Government a penny, and second in

the way she sought to curvy political favour — including a leak of her "action plan" to the Daily Mail — a pretty empty gesture. The Heritage Secretary produced no new research on television violence, set out no new legislative proposals, and failed miserably to put into perspective television's contribution to violence. Instead, she invited television bosses to tighten their codes of practice governing gratuitous violence, called for clearer warnings to parents of the kind of material television programmes contain, and announced there would be a seminar next year on the issue.

Liberals have been guilty in the past of refusing to contemplate the link between television and violence but not anymore. Just because respectable researchers have failed to find a direct association should not pre-empt policymakers from applying commonsense and recognising that links may exist. The advertising industry does not invest its billions in television for altruistic purposes but because of the medium's influence and pull. Television's influence should not be exaggerated but it is important. The industry knows this and has cut the amount of violence on the screen in half since 1986 — down from 1.1 per cent to 0.6 per cent of programme time. Clearly, more could be done — and will be done. The BBC revised its codes this year and independent television is due to review its codes next year. Ministerial interventions are unnecessary and unwelcome.

The Whitehall gaffe syndrome

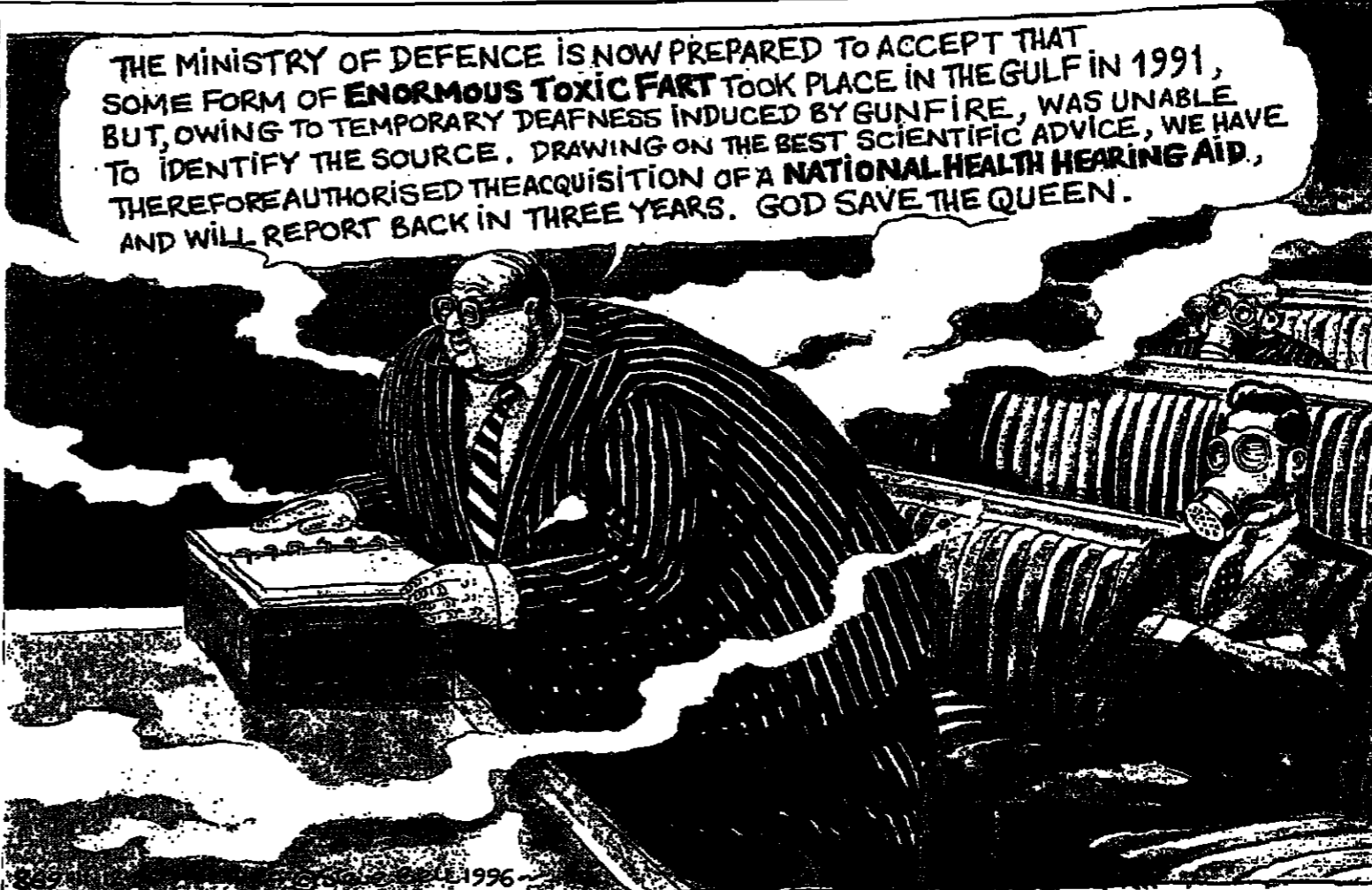
At last ministers admit what veterans have known for years

THE MINISTRY OF Defence now admits that there is such a thing as Gulf War illness — though not yet a Gulf War syndrome. Yesterday, Nicholas Soames, the armed forces minister, told Parliament that some Gulf veterans "are suffering from sickness which medical science has so far found it difficult to explain." That is what the veterans have been saying all along. They do not claim there was one single cause — that is why they describe it as a "syndrome". Attention in Britain has focused on the use of organophosphate (OP) pesticides; in the US on the proximity of some servicemen to chemical weapons (whether used by Iraq or destroyed by Allied action). There is also general concern about the "cocktail" of vaccinations and tablets which many soldiers consumed.

The research now announced by Mr Soames makes good epidemiological sense, but it should have been initiated

long ago. The MoD says that enough veterans with possible symptoms have now been located to provide a meaningful base line. But they have been there all along, only waiting to be identified. The new programme will only be completed nine years after the actual war. Meanwhile, some suspect procedures could be repeated in the field.

Mr Soames seems to be admitting that his ministry has made a mess of things while denying that there was ever any intention of a cover-up. Perhaps not deliberately, but the MoD's leisurely approach suggests at the very least a callous disregard. The misleading information supplied to ministers on the use of OPs — now the subject of a separate investigation — suggests something worse. The lobbying efforts of MPs and the veterans were scoffed at by the Government. Without them there would still be no proper (though long overdue) programme of research.



Letters to the Editor

EMU: fudge, fact and fiction

I AM amazed, although perhaps by now I should not be, at the Government's hypocrisy in accusing other nations of "fudging the figures" to ensure compliance with the convergence criteria for entry into EMU, when they themselves are fudging all sorts of figures to the people of this country (Not a single reason to join, December 9).

The scale of a nation's debt, the PSBR, is one of the main criteria for membership of EMU and which has to be no more than a certain percentage of GDP to qualify. In simple terms, this means that the country has not borrowed more than it can reasonably repay without causing a destabilising effect on the economy, in much the same way that I would have to satisfy my bank manager that I can repay a loan without getting into financial difficulties.

It has taken John Major only five years to double the PSBR from a figure that took his predecessors some 150 years to accumulate. He has borrowed not for investment but to give away politically expedient tax cuts, which his Chancellor realises could now jeopardise EMU first-stage convergence qualification.

So, in order to fudge the figures, he creates the Private Finance Initiative, whereby various projects that should come out of government funding — such as roads and school buildings — are now supposed to be funded by the PFI. This means that the contractors are obliged to raise the finance by borrowing from their banks, issuing bonds, or whatever, and the Government has to repay them from normal tax revenues, over anything up to 30 years — thus not only hypothecating for years ahead the tax revenues of the people, but also saddling future administrations with the burden of their crass mismanagement.

They are doing exactly what they accuse Johnny Forester of doing. Michael Allan, Swanhead, Wiltshire SP2 0QW.

WHILE I largely agreed with Larry Elliott's case against EMU, he is being over-optimistic in suggesting that the adoption of a single European language (English, obviously) would solve the problems that a single currency will not.

The much-heralded advertisement by the European Movement states that "under no circumstances should the Government rule out participation in a single European currency, now or in the future." It would be difficult, if not impossible, to find a student of English, linguistics, semantics or lexicography who would interpret this to mean anything but "Britain should enter the EMU at whatever terms are offered."

It is equally certain that the great and the good who shared this advertisement will deny it says any such thing. Chris Jones, 20 Antonine Gate, St Albans, Herts.

WHAT a load of nonsense Ros Coward writes about the alleged trauma of getting used to using the euro (The euro in your pocket is devalued, December 9). Has she never spent a week or two abroad, using a different currency? It only takes a couple of days before you stop mentally converting prices back into sterling and start to recognise the real value of prices in francs, pesetas or whatever, and learn to judge a potential bargain.

Mixed views on mixed race

AS an academic researcher and a person who is happy to describe themselves as being of "mixed race", I found Bernie Grant's contention that society views mixed-race people as being black both simplistic and a little dangerous (Row over plan for census race labels, December 9). In my own experience, "You would never know you were half-Pakistani" is as common a response as being taken for being black or Asian, while suspicion, hostility, and even rejection from one or both of one's host communities has not been uncommon.

While I accept that, in many fields, mixed-race people will suffer from the same racial discrimination as other ethnic groups, this is no reason for rejecting the concept of mixed race as a racial category. With mixed-race friends and relatives, I have witnessed some of the consequences of being made to choose between two racial groups, two cultures and two identities — ranging from the person deciding to adopt a more "English" name, to full-scale emotional breakdown.

If a mixed-race person views themselves more strongly on one side or another than that is fine. But when someone feels themselves to be mixed race, such a view must be deemed to be

legitimate. A number of research projects that I have carried out found mixed race to be one of the most popular categories of ethnicity. (Dr Usman Awaiz Khan, Department of Politics and Public Policy, University of Luton, Park Square, Luton LU1 3JU.

WHEN I arrived in Fiji on contract I was appalled to find that the colonial government classified everybody into seven racial groups:

1. European (naturally first); 2. Fijian; 3. Indian (all persons from the sub-continent); 4. Rotuman (an island within the Fiji group); 5. Chinese; 6. Other Pacific Islanders and 7. PAKENETS (Persons of mixed native and European descent). Every government document, driving licence, medical record, crime statistic etc. contained this information.

On independence six months later, the new, indigenous administration continued this system exactly as before despite considerable inter-communal tension between Fijians and Indians. The new constitution required some voting to take place within each racial group as well as on a common roll.

As a doctor, I was fascinated by some of the differences in health statistics

shown between various communities — for example, Fijian mothers suffered a much higher incidence of post-partum haemorrhage than Indian ones; conversely, Indian mothers tended to have many more underweight babies. Clearly this information could only be gathered if a reliable system of racial classification was in place.

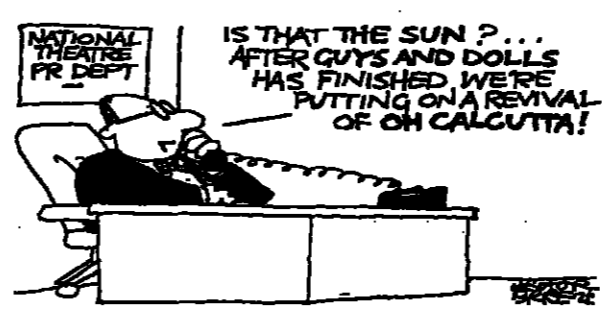
However, the introduction of such classification in this country is fraught with difficulty. It could only be useful if there were a limited number of well-defined groups, well understood by everyone. That is not the case. The political implications are too terrible to contemplate; and far outweigh any hypothetical benefits there might be in medical or sociological research.

John Burdley, Paveira Road, Birmingham B17. IT is comforting to see that people are thinking harder about issues of "mixed race". But why do we rigidly re-affirm colour as the main way of distinguishing origin and race? Why do we not ask about white peoples' mixed heritage? Surely Jewish, Irish, European etc are also relevant? Lara Charles, Branch Hill, London NW3.

ONE set of questions that is still not being asked is that of religious affiliation. Ethnicity is not simply a matter of place origin, first language or colour of skin. The religion of the respondent provides a clear marker of a person's culture and beliefs. In today's Britain, which is a multi-faith society, religion, as well as racial origin, is vitally important.

Incidentally, when an enlightened newspaper, are you going to stop the use of the sociologically and scientifically defined word race? Nadeem Hal, Lecturer in Sociology, Manchester Metropolitan University, Rosamond Street, Manchester M15 6LL.

WHY, at the end of the 20th century in a multi-cultural country like ours, is the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys offering people a selection of ethnic categories at all? Why don't they ask people what they consider their ethnicity to be and just record the answer? This would surely preserve the credibility of OFCS but, more importantly, it would help to preserve the dignity of people questioned. David Shannon, Woodland Mount, Hertford SG13.



Change your tune, guys

YOUR leader (December 5) on Guys and Dolls evades the real question. This is not the status of the musical — it needs no defence — but the decision to occupy our main subsidised stage with its revival for at least three and a half months.

This cannot be defended. It adds to the glut of commercial West End musicals, abandons the valued repertory system and deprives serious theatre-

lovers of large-scale innovative and classical drama. Even Richard Eyre, you report, has the grace to wonder if his tired idea was "shameful".

What is so obviously in need of revival are the true spirit, purpose, energy and enterprise of our National Theatre. Arthur Scholey, 1 Cranbourne Road, London N10 2BT.

Air support

AS Douglas Bader's most recent biographer, I knew the real man as well as any one else alive (A hero is shot down — again, December 8). He was a great man in every way — not a flawed hero. He helped hundreds of disabled people to survive and recover — all with no publicity. He was infinitely courageous and caring.

You say Bader's Big Wing was only used "as back-up defence". In the later stages of the battle, it represented about one quarter of the total number of squadrons fighting the Luftwaffe. And it had remarkable results.

As for Bader's claims of numerical success, these were always exaggerated by everyone. On a major day, the total losses by the Germans were put as 180 but later revealed as 75. This was wartime propaganda. If it hadn't been for people like Bader, we would not have won the second world war. His memory is immortal. J.F. Turner, 302 The Metropole, Folkestone, Kent.

Crossing the line

THOSE of us who dish it out to politicians must expect to be shot at when we make mistakes. But there is a difference between a critic's opinion and malicious invention. Roy Greenslade (Media, December 9) complains that it was "odd to see the BBC's Political Editor Robin Oakley giving the official No 10 line on Wednesday [about Major not bowing to pressure from Clarke] when it emerged the next day that he had bowed", adding a gratuitous insult about my "willingness to peddle the Downing Street line".

This is rubbish. I did not do a report on the Clarke/Major affair on Tuesday. I said: "The Government has taken Norman Lamont's advice — if you're going to sit on the fence, do so firmly", and reported that the Prime Minister will stick to the compromise wait-and-see on a single currency whatever the Eurosceptic grumbles." This is rubbish. I did not do a report on the Clarke/Major affair on Tuesday. I said: "The Government has taken Norman Lamont's advice — if you're going to sit on the fence, do so firmly", and reported that the Prime Minister will stick to the compromise wait-and-see on a single currency whatever the Eurosceptic grumbles."

Apart from proving correct, that was hardly the "Downing Street line". I do not peddle anyone's line. I report what I find and will continue to do. Robin Oakley, BBC, Press Gallery, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

A little difference of opinion

MARK SEDDON writes the kind of rubbish (Letters, December 10) that makes the publication he edits so unreadable and irrelevant. He claims that in the 1980s, I was "eloquently voicing... dissenting views on multilateral disarmament and the Common Market". Rightly or wrongly, I did no such thing. Instead, I joyfully — or, if you like, stupidly — kept my trap shut and went along with the follies inflicted on the Labour Party by the destructive faction which had grabbed hold of the party and with which, characteristically, Seddon still identifies himself. Gerald Kaufman MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

THE answer to the question of sex and violence on TV is quite simple. For a 12-month period, show only those films such as Dumbo, Mary Poppins and The Sound of Music if the birth-rate falls dramatically and violent crimes cease, the cause will be proven. If they rise, then Mrs Bottomley and

the pro-censorship lobby will have some explaining to do. Edward Johnson, 12 Horbury Crescent, London W11 3NF.

THINK Allister Darling's "scheming Medici courtier's-style beard" (Labour star takes it on the chin, December 9) is absolutely delicious, perfect for an aspiring top politician. I kept my trap shut and went along with the follies inflicted on the Labour Party by the destructive faction which had grabbed hold of the party and with which, characteristically, Seddon still identifies himself. Gerald Kaufman MP, House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA.

YOUR allegations that Rwanda government forces are fighting along with Zairian rebels in Eastern Zaire (December 3) are baseless and dangerous to already strained relations between Zaire and Rwanda. Rwandan forces will never fight in Zaire. (Dr) Z S Neenga, Rwandan Ambassador, 59-59 Trafalgar Square, London WC2N 8DX.

A Country Diary

TAMAR VALLEY: The old tiled quays at Morwellham are shiny wet and, outside the dock, the river runs high with sparkling eddies and currents swirling quietly in brown, muddy water. Beside bulks of timber, ropes and a tightly-shrouded hull, lies the Garthstone with her distinctive, elliptical counter-stern and pretty fiddlehead carved with oak leaves and acorns. The sturdy, 76-foot hull has been framed in English oak and planked with larch; the bulwark stanchions have yet to be planked up. For now, Tom Nielsen and Co, traditional shipbuilders, rigging and marine engineers, are away in Gloucester, cutting out deck beams, the next stage in rebuilding this ketch-rigged, 100-ton cargo vessel. With the help of European and Millennium funds, Dartington Amenity Research Trust, which has Garthstone on long-term charter, plans to launch next year and eventually restore her to full sailing condition. This handsome merchant vessel was the last to be

launched on the Tamar, built by James Goss in his yard on the Devon bank opposite Calstock. There, on a small patch of hard shingle, this highly-skilled, hard-working boat-builder, with his sons and workmen, hand-sawed timbers, mended the masts, Cotchele, and fashioned it mainly into barges and boats for rowing clubs and the navy. Garthstone, however, was their first, contemporary with the building of the adjoining railway was carried to Calstock's official welcome. The reception party followed in her wake, past derelict mine stacks and steep woods to Morwellham's dock, a mile upstream. VIRGINIA SPIERS

Diary
Matthew Norman

VACANCY occurs in the radio-ham department at Conservative Central Office. Dr Julian Lewis, who has twiddled dials with distinction in the hunt for anti-Tory bias, has hung up his headphones. Julian is now concentrating on fighting the seat of New Forest East. As he has made an unfortunate start. In another newspaper's diary, it was reported last week that his colleague Emily Barr would be standing against him, and had already toured the constituency in his presence. Although the claim is false - Emily will not be standing there (it was mooted, but with Scally was fielding a candidate, we can't split the vote), and has never visited the seat - Julian's "office" was quoted as confirming it. That, at least, with some insolence, Julian already speaking to my so-called rival. "If it turns out that someone in my office said this," he explains, "I am prepared to tick them off and to apologise." We have put Julian on final warning that should this outrage be repeated, we will have him before my friend Lord Wakeham's Press Complaints Commission so fast, his feet won't touch the ground.

IN what, given New Labour policy on unemployment law, many will regard as a sublime irony, Oofy Wegg-Prosser has gone on rapid-rebuttal strike. Oofy refuses to discuss any apparent sins of omission by his master, Mandy Mandelson. The first concerns the absence from an otherwise replete Who's Who entry of a spell as assistant to Albert Booth during which, in 1981, Booth was the only Shadow Cabinet member to vote for Tony Benn as deputy leader. Having declared "Albert Booth is dead" - news that will shock many, not least Lord Booth - Oofy would go no further. He then declined to comment on why Mandy, hit into a passionate Europhile and a key member of the cross-party group, failed to sign the European Movement advertisement in Monday's Times. Is Mandy repositioning himself? Is New Labour shifting? Oofy's lips are sealed.

THE Diary's Christmas Card postbag begins to bulge, and yesterday brought the most eagerly awaited of all. After weeks of speculation about what Michael Winner would put on his card - one rumour suggested his new coat of arms, the jumbo knickers rampant - anti-climax seemed inevitable. Not a bit of it. Taking his innate humility off the leash, Michael has put on the front a specially commissioned portrait (by Peter Edwards) of himself. By way of contrast, meanwhile, he devotes the back of the card to... a specially commissioned portrait (by Anne H Mackintosh) of himself. Lest anyone is reading this over a meal, I will not describe either.

CONCERNED by his column's absence from last Friday's Mail, we call Terry Major-Ball. "I was disappointed," he admits, "but they were short of space and assure me it will be back next week." Let us hope so. Terry has just returned from an expedition to his beloved Alliders of Croydon. "I tried to write about Croydon recently," he said, "but they said columnists shouldn't write about their home town." says Terry, and excellent advice it is, especially from the paper with a feature entitled My Home Town. So to Terry's Christmas message: "Be true to others and thereby to yourself." And upon this note of seasonal wisdom we say farewell.

WITH heavy heart, we come to the supplier of yesterday's message, Peter Bumley, who has reverted to the original spelling after charges of affectation. According to a feature on the artist Jonathan Yeo (son of Tim), Bumley paid something between £5,000 and £20,000 for a portrait of his wife. Knowing how much of the summer we devoted to Bumley Relief - the charity formed to alleviate the family's poverty after he asked for £800 for a brief TV appearance defending his party - you can imagine that this news is very hard to take. Frankly, the sense of betrayal is unbearable. Et tu, Bumley? Et tu?

MOVING story of a dog's devotion to its master features in Dogs Today magazine. When his owner collapsed and was left defenceless in Bonn, Otto the Rottweiler bravely defended him against all comers for a full 12 minutes. Unfortunately, all comers were paramedics keen to treat the 66-year-old for a coronary, and by the time they finally got to him, he was dead. Still, it's the thought that counts.

Take one cook book, simmer for hours

Commentary Catherine Bennett

IF THE populace is, as so often alleged, fickle and contrary, mutable and capricious - why haven't we had enough of cooks? A few years ago, the market for celebrity pop-and-pan artists was booming. One restaurateur, Anouska Hempel, recently attempted to rename a London square after herself. Some chefs dress up in peculiar clothes, take part in quizzes and competitions; others set up as thinkers, and de-

notice "unnatural" genetically engineered food. But happily for Alastair Little, who has a new book Italian Kitchens, to sell this Christmas, the public has not begun to tire. For the mass market, there are now 30 regular cookery programmes on television, supplemented by repeats on a dedicated cable channel. Those who can afford to set, as well as spectate, struggle for space in designer kitchens where - supposing the telephone is answered, and the customer approved - they may, for a couple of grilling hours, be permitted to spend around £20 sitting in a remote corner, then shooed away so that the restaurateur can double his profits.

Last year Della Smith sold over a million copies of Della Smith's Christmas, this year the BBC expects sales of her various titles to make over £10 million. Their appeal, even after last Christmas's great heaps of discounted, given-away, Della Smiths, seems undiminished. They are piled prominently in Waterstones, sharing the same, groaning table as the River Café Cookbook, Nico by Nico Ladenis, Open Rhodos Around Britain, and Joan Smith's hopeful food anthology, Humry For You.

In fact, when you look at some of the competition, Della has earned her weeks in her handback and paperback bestseller lists (currently number three and number two). Compare her with Jane Fonda, who presents exclusive recipes for Tuna Salad Sandwiches and Turkey Burgers. Contrast with Clare Lattimer's risible Comfort Food: cauliflower cheese, baked apples, hot chocolate. And surely, even the most glib will realise there is something suspect about a shiny box called Allegro al Dente, which contains "15 classic opera arias on CD and 75 classic and modern recipes in a beautifully bound book... It's about love, death, linguine, passion, wine, betrayal, prosciutto, sex, disguise, parmigiano, war, treachery, and tagliatelle". It's for people who still haven't twigged that the same tenors-while-you-cook effect can be achieved, at minimum cost, by switching on Radio Three.

But then, how many of Allegro al Dente's competitors' works are answering a genuine absence or need? Even Anton Mosimann, who once tempted readers with idiosyncratic fantasies in gold leaf, is now reduced to Moshimann's World - featuring the kind of dishes Mother used to think of making, but on second thoughts, decided against: paella, moussaka, osso bucco and wiener schnitzel. Most of the spin-offs, stamped "accompanies the TV series", are equally spurious - how many more

Conquer the world with 26 signatures



David McKie

THE TURMOIL over Europe convulsing the Conservative Party has been further inflamed by the publication in Monday's Times of a half-page advertisement demanding a committed, positive approach to British membership of the European Union. The signature list, divided into two groups, 1994-95 of them, from Sir Lawrence Airey to Stephen Woodard, get a big fat spot on the page.

H Bigot, R Compton Bratt, Fiona Headstrong, Judge Engelbert Tappett, the Bishop of Worcester and Walter Wharford wish to join me in pointing out - these tactics can even be counter-productive. Fifty-one local Conservatives circulated a letter calling for Sir George Gardner, the knight of gloomy countenance who backed John Redwood as leader despite his constituency party's advice, to be dropped as the party's representative in Reigate; but Gardner survived. More than 130 MPs, including Patrick Mayhew, two past party chairmen (Powell and Baker) and a former Chief Whip, Michael Jopling, signed a letter declaring that Nicholas Scott was an excellent fellow whom his local party ought to hang on to; but Scott got the push.

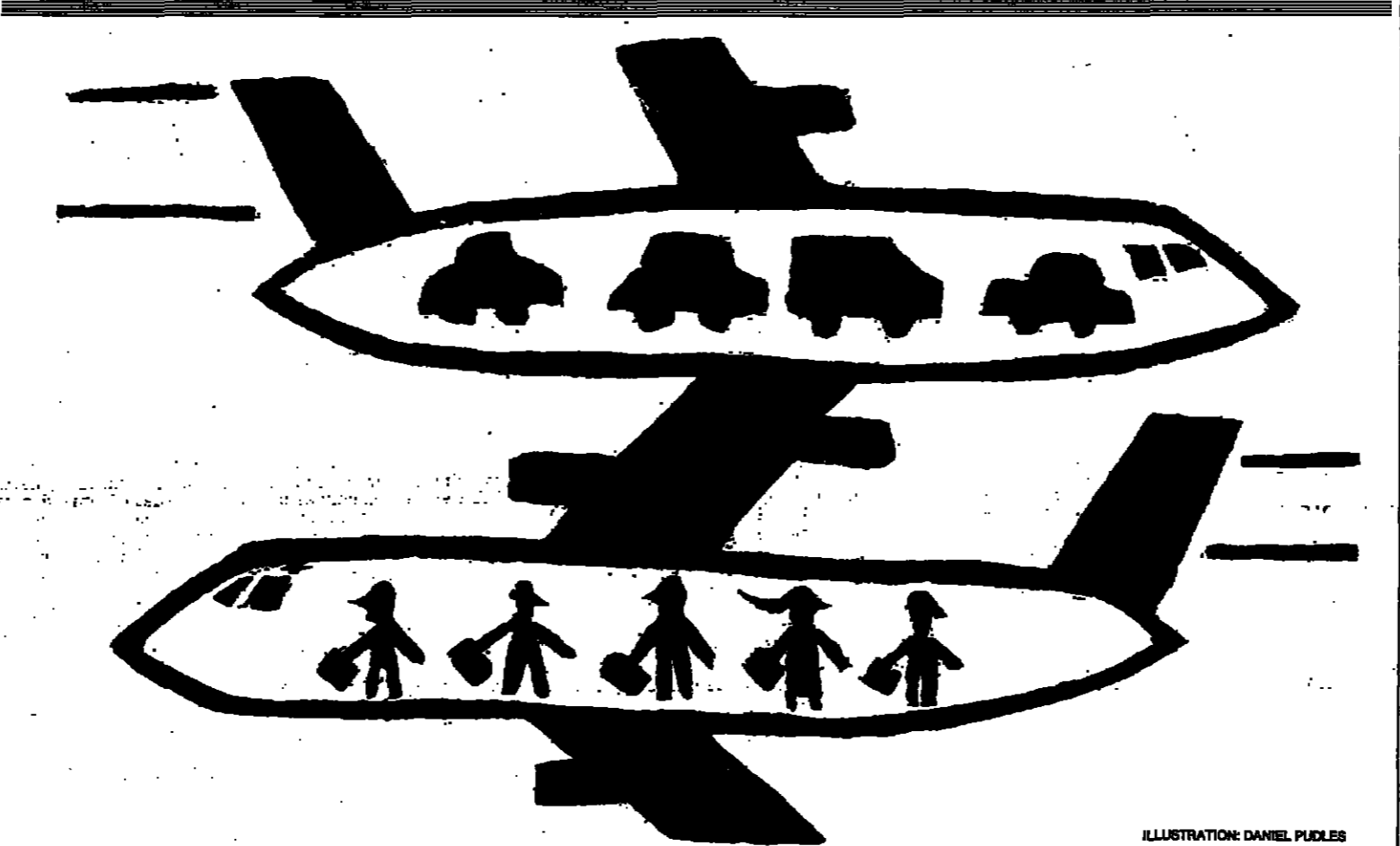


ILLUSTRATION: DANIEL PUDLES

Conspiracy of silence

Politicians shouldn't kid themselves: they don't control the economy. For all their summits and monetary treaties, argues Jonathan Eyal, power lies with the multi-nationals and the media

THE first summit of the World Trade Organisation ended this week in Singapore with smug satisfaction. The WTO now embraces more than 120 countries, all ostensibly committed to free trade. True, China and Russia are still not members, and some sectors, such as financial services and agriculture, remain highly regulated. But all member states are pledged to eliminate such snags, and trade across frontiers is now rising at four times the rate of growth in world gross domestic product.

hardly a recipe for social stability. And, while everyone extols the virtues of free trade, few are prepared to accept that this means losing a job because someone in China or Korea can produce the same goods cheaper; economic theories about "comparative advantages" may be fine for erudite academics, but they are useless as a political platform.

well. The problem is, however, that no Western politician is courageous enough to give up the pretence that such trends can be controlled from above.

The world recession is apparently over, but EU unemployment continues to rise, to 18 million citizens today

current economic policies somehow do not deliver either the predictability or the prosperity to which they were accustomed in the past.

people everywhere are only too painfully aware of realities: those who do affect their lives are usually unknown and unselected; those who ostensibly hold political power prove unable to exercise it.

Not one of the West's leaders is ready to admit that the corollary of free trade in goods has been a free trade in politicians as well. The real rulers of the world today are the chairmen of multi-media companies and multi-national institutions, not the humble ministers who spent what was, by all accounts, an agreeable time at the WTO gathering in Singapore.

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Finance Guardian

Alliance members say yes

Building society wins backing to convert to bank

Richard Miles

ALLIANCE & Leicester members gave their overwhelming backing to the building society's conversion plans yesterday, ensuring they will each receive free shares worth about £1,000 next year.

Some 70 per cent of the building society's savers took part in the poll, with 96 per cent voting in favour of its conversion to a bank. Of the borrowers who voted, 97 per cent said yes to the proposals.

Yesterday's mandate allows Alliance & Leicester to proceed with its listing on the stock market, scheduled for between April and June, depending on the timing of the general election. On flotation, 250 free shares will be distributed to each of the 2.4 million qualifying members.

The result of the poll followed a sometimes heated special meeting in London, attended by almost 500 members, most of whom were long-term savers disgruntled at the society's decision to make a flat-rate payment to all qualifying investors.

With the exception of Abbey National, other converting building societies have linked the value of the payout to the size of the saver's account balance and the customer's loyalty record. Halifax, which also plans to convert next summer, will follow this practice.

Many Alliance & Leicester members feel the flat-rate payment unfairly favours "carpetbaggers" — speculators who open accounts in the hope of a windfall — because they will receive the same number of shares as savers who have been with the society for most of their lives.

John Brown, a saver with Alliance & Leicester for 60 years, spoke for many at the meeting when he told the board that her loyalty and trust had been ill-served by the society's policy of paying about £1,000 to each and every qualifying member.

Ms Brown, a 62-year-old pensioner from Banstead, Surrey, said: "I feel neglected for my trust in the Alliance. It is the long-term investor who has enabled the society to grow to this size." She is now considering withdrawing the bulk of her £50,000 savings in protest at the level payout.

Patrick Mountain, head of the Alliance & Leicester investors' action group, said he had received 1,500 letters from disenchanted long-term investors. Many correspondents accused the board of "moral corruption or worse," said Mr Mountain.

Group chief executive, Peter White, rejected the criticism, saying that a flat-rate payout was the best way to reflect the "mutual principle" of one member, one vote. "Around 70 per cent of our members have less than £2,000 in their accounts and 63 per cent less than £5,000," he said.

The board also came under fire for its refusal to hand out shares to disabled savers who were not the first named on the account. One member of the audience claimed Alliance & Leicester could, under the law, make multiple allocations of shares "in particular circumstances".

Mr White, however, dismissed the suggestion, saying Alliance & Leicester was bound by the terms of the Building Societies Act, which stipulated that shares could be distributed only to the first named. "It was impossible to devise a share scheme that would please everybody," he said.

The only remaining obstacle to flotation is new building societies legislation to be published later this month. This will remove converting societies' five year protection from predators if they seek to acquire a financial institution.



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Notebook

Where loyalty gets punished



Edited by Alex Brummer

IT IS perhaps too much to hope that building society members soon will rise up in revolt against the loss of mutuality and vote against the cash and share bribe on offer. Nevertheless, dissenting voices drowned out elsewhere in the rush to collect the cash have properly been heard in the case of the Alliance & Leicester.

The society's path from mutuality to a conversion scheduled for between April and June next year has been bungled almost from the start. As recently as a year ago, the Alliance & Leicester was among those societies defending the idea of mutuality, to the point that it was willing to sponsor papers and seminars spelling out the virtues. The moment it realised that the larger part of its sector was heading for the exit and its status, the society joined the rush, even though there is still no convincing case that flotation will allow it to expand into areas from which it is currently excluded. In fact, the Alliance & Leicester already had substantial banking operations, through Giro, which gave it a flexibility unavailable to others.

As for the specifics of the conversion, the flat earth approach, which applies to everyone except directors and senior executives, may look fair but has been highly damaging. In particular, those members with larger deposits who remained loyal have, in effect, been punished for not taking their cash and moving to other mutuals, offshore or elsewhere for a higher return.

Other societies, including the far larger and more complicated Halifax, have managed to relate deposits to the cash/share allocation. Mutuality may mean one person, one vote, but as the Alliance & Leicester is abandoning that principle anyway, it ought to recognise that the depositors who have been punished more to the society and deserves a better return than one with £1,000 or less.

Moreover, the society has manoeuvred itself into an untenable position on disabled members by its insistence that only the first-named holder of an account (usually a carer) can receive the payout, thus excluding perhaps that same carer from another payout on their own account. Other societies, including the Halifax, have managed to deal with this problem, which seems to have been beyond the competence of the A&L management. The case for a legal challenge on this issue is a strong one which should be pressed, even if it holds up the whole process.

There is, of course, one group at the Alliance & Leicester which will be punished by its penchant for most utilities which care to comment on the windfall tax have been peddling tales of catastrophe and woe, threatening legal action, and even, it is claimed, trying to enlist White House officials to the cause of getting the tax plan scrapped.

Now the utility with the biggest debt burden — Northern has had to take on unusually high gearing levels to defend itself from takeover — has still put a hand in its own pocket and stumped up the cash. In doing so, Northern directors will have seen their already small circle of friends in the electricity industry shrink further. If it is any consolation, they have found a new buddy in Gordon Brown.

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Compass sets £3.75 as minimum wage limit

Ian King

COMPASS Group, the world's largest contract catering group, warned yesterday that it would be unhappy if the minimum wage proposed by Labour came in at above £3.75 an hour.

Compass, many of whose 30,000 British employees are part-time, said the minimum wage would not have any impact on the company if it was set at £2.75 or under.

Francis Mackay, chief executive, said anything above that figure would pose problems. "At over £3.75, it would become a pricing, tariff and productivity issue."

His comments came as Compass revealed a 56 per cent jump in full-year pre-tax profits, to £114.3 million. The company continues to see benefits from its clutch of branded offerings. The latest is Ritazza, a coffee bar offering flavoured beverages, including Christmas pudding-flavoured coffee. Compass shares closed up 8 1/2p, at 626p, on the figures.



Francis Mackay, left, and finance director Roger Matthews drink to rise in profits, at Ritazza coffee bar, Victoria station. PHOTOGRAPH: MARTIN GOWEN

BCCI fraud victims paid £1 bn

Dan Atkinson

VICTIMS of the biggest fraud in history — the \$20 billion (£12.5 billion) collapse of the Bank of Credit and Commerce International — saw the end of a five-year wait yesterday as they received the first payments since the fraud-riddled bank crashed into liquidation in summer 1991.

Nearly £1 billion was paid out to 30,000 creditors around the world, including a thousand in the UK, in a cheque-out equivalent to 24.5p in the pound — as predicted in yesterday's Guardian. A second payment, worth not less than another 10p in the pound, is due within 16 months and a third, worth not less than 6p, is expected eventually.

But this third payout — and any subsequent compensation — will rely upon the success of large-scale legal actions planned by liquidators Deloitte & Touche against, *inter alia*, the Bank of England and BCCI's former auditors, accountants Ernst & Young and Price Waterhouse. Each of these writs is for about £1 billion.

Ironically, the size of yesterday's payout was due in part to international criminals: about \$1 billion of BCCI losses were never pressed with the liquidators, almost certainly because the creditors were persons of ill repute. BCCI was linked to money laundering.

Beneficiaries of the first disbursements included six British local authorities, one of which — the Western Isles council — notoriously, put more than £28 million on deposit with BCCI in the hope of better returns. Yesterday's move will mean 56 million for the islands.

BCCI — based in Luxembourg and the Cayman Islands, effectively run from the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi, wrote off \$2.2 billion of his own market HQ in the City — was shut in July 1991 as a result of international regulatory action led by the Bank of England. Liquidators soon discovered BCCI had no capital and contained "black holes" — including bogus accounts and missing funds — totalling nearly £13 billion.

Aside from the \$1 billion-odd "waived" by international crime, yesterday's £280 million "distribution" was made possible by Deloitte having recovered about half the \$10 billion-plus missing from BCCI five years ago. The bank's chief shareholder, the Sheikh of Abu Dhabi, wrote off \$2.2 billion of his own claims against the bank and put \$1.8 billion into a compensation fund. In addition to realisations of the bank's few assets, a further \$400 million has been obtained through legal action, and the United States authorities have agreed to release half of the \$1 billion of BCCI assets they seized after the crash.

There has been criticism of liquidators' costs — £13 million as of mid-January this year — but Deloitte has argued that the expected 40 per cent final payments to creditors are near-miraculous given the huge negative worth of BCCI at the time of the shutdown.

Hinchliffe loses argument over Facia liquidator

Dan Atkinson

STEPHEN Hinchliffe stalled yesterday to persuade creditors of his crashed Facia retail group to appoint the liquidator of his choice.

Instead, the accountancy firm BDO Stoy Hayward was given the job of liquidating the company, which is estimated to have debts of about £20 million.

Mr Hinchliffe did not attend the creditors' meeting in Leeds, at which it emerged there is money available to pay only about 3.75p in the pound.

It is understood the former Facia chief had decided on legal advice not to attend.

Creditors, led by Sears, unanimously chose BDO Stoy Hayward against Mr Hinchliffe's choice of a local firm, Geoffrey Martin & Co.

Facia — which had included high-street names such as Sock Shop, Red or Dead and Contessa — collapsed in the summer. Shareholders will also receive as part of advice to shareholders to reject the CE Electric offer.

If it remains independent, Northern intends to expand its joint venture with Rolle Royce in the development of gas-fired power stations. Shareholders will also receive an upbeat assessment of the value of the company's holding in Sovereign, the North Sea gas business, and in the telecoms company Ionica.

CE Electric dismissed the Northern defence as "not jam tomorrow but in the next century". The proposals lagged behind initiatives announced by rivals.

Yorkshire Electricity interim profits fell to \$80.8 million from \$98.3 million turnover but the dividend went up 33 per cent to 15.8p a share.

Costain sells coal and land stakes

Roger Cowe

THE fire sale of assets at the battered construction group Costain continued yesterday when the company announced that it had found buyers for its US coal business and its share in the Spittfields development in London.

Following the sales, chairman Sir Christopher Benson and chief executive Alan Lovell will stand down in the new year.

But the group warned that its troubles continued, with much greater losses than had been anticipated over the past few months.

As a result, net assets had shrunk to less than half of its share capital, requiring an extraordinary general meeting under the terms of the Companies Acts.

The egm will be held on January 6 and the directors warned yesterday that disposals are essential to meet bank lending limits. They also said that bank facilities should be sufficient to cover its needs, but the board has made no allowance for any liability to Eurotunnel by the Channel Tunnel consortium TMI, of which Costain was part.

Remaining US coal operations will be sold to an American mining company, Rencon, for about £21 million, against the £50 million expected from an abortive deal with Lonrho last summer.

Northern defies Labour threat to evade predator

Chris Barrie

LABOUR'S plans for a windfall tax on the privatised utilities were given a boost last night when Northern Electric broke ranks by promising hefty increases in dividends to shareholders even if such a levy were imposed.

In a last-ditch attempt to escape the clutches of a £782 million hostile bid from US predator CE Electric, the Newcastle-based electricity company promised higher dividends despite a threat of windfall tax of as much as 281 million.

The promise, made in Northern's third formal defence document, includes a 17 per cent hike in the dividend to 50p a share in the year to March 1998. Dividends will then grow 7 per cent a year.

Northern said that it opposed a windfall tax but Labour immediately seized on the dividend pledge as evidence that the utilities were

close to accepting that a tax was inevitable. One source close to shadow chancellor Gordon Brown said that utilities are lobbying against the tax. But, in private, most accept it will be introduced. "They can evidently afford it while maintaining strong dividend flows to shareholders."

Labour indicated that Northern would know the scale of the levy once the party announced the methodology behind the tax. There would be no appeal process.

Utilities are lobbying against tax. But in private most accept it will be introduced

Chris Barrie

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Labour indicated that Northern would know the scale of the levy once the party announced the methodology behind the tax. There would be no appeal process.

Northern is also promising to merge its electricity and gas supply business with another company, thought to be

either United Utilities or Hydro-Electric. The joint venture, if agreed, would save £28 million a year by 2000. The cost of the merger is put at £25 million.

The merger is the cornerstone of a strategy document issued by the Northern board, as part of advice to shareholders to reject the CE Electric offer.

If it remains independent, Northern intends to expand its joint venture with Rolle Royce in the development of gas-fired power stations. Shareholders will also receive an upbeat assessment of the value of the company's holding in Sovereign, the North Sea gas business, and in the telecoms company Ionica.

Bank union fears 800 jobs will go in new round of cuts

Pauline Springett

ANOTHER 800 jobs could be axed from the embattled banking and insurance sectors, finance union Bifu warned yesterday.

The union, which estimates that 100,000 jobs have been lost from banking since 1990 and warns that a further 100,000 could go from insurance, identified the latest jobs at risk after separate announcements by insurer Guardian and Barclays Bank.

Guardian said it was axing 350 jobs and closing 12 offices in its UK general insurance division. It said the acquisition of Legal & General's commercial insurance operation earlier this year had resulted in duplication and costs needed to be cut.

Although a spokesman said the company was hoping the job losses would be accommodated through voluntary redundancies and early retirement, compulsory redundancies could not be ruled out.

Bifu attacked the proposal, scheduled for completion by next summer, as arbitrary. "These appear to be intended to please analysts and the stock market. It's just change for change's sake — it will not help customer service," said a spokesman.

The union was also incensed by news that US bank Morgan Stanley is acquiring the global securities business of Barclays. No price was disclosed for the deal, although City sources estimated its value at around £50 million. It will involve the transfer of some £250 billion in assets administered by Barclays.

Bifu said Morgan Stanley had guaranteed jobs for only 67 of Barclays' staff, putting around 400 in jeopardy.

Tourist rates — bank sells

Australia	2.00	France	8.40	Italy	2.48	Singapore	2.265
Austria	17.00	Germany	2.265	Malta	0.5625	South Africa	7.55
Belgium	57.50	Greece	337.00	Netherlands	2.81	Spain	210.00
Canada	2.19	Hong Kong	12.49	New Zealand	2.2750	Sweden	11.17
Cyprus	0.7525	India	58.12	Norway	10.47	Switzerland	2.12
Denmark	0.8175	Ireland	0.8575	Portugal	255.75	Turkey	165.710
Finland	7.83	Israel	5.40	Saudi Arabia	1.17	USA	1.5175

Supplied by NatWest Bank (including Indian rupee and Israeli shekel).

Alders reflects retail boom

Roger Couze

DEPARTMENT store chain Alders yesterday produced evidence to back claims of a high street boom, reporting its best sales picture since 1988 and predicting that buoyant conditions would continue for two years.

Chief executive Harvey Lipsith acknowledged that interest rate rises would dampen consumer enthusiasm. But he was confident that the recovery was strong enough to withstand some increase, and should not be knocked by a Labour victory in the general election.

"If people feel that rates are on the rise then, even though they may still be dramatically below where they were three or four years ago, there is an element of nervousness that creeps into sentiment and that must flow through to the retail sector in particular," said Mr Lipsith. "And while the election is bound to create uncertainty I don't think the outcome is critical to demand in the short term. So I am fairly confident of a strong retail market for up to two years."

Alders, whose sales are more heavily weighted towards furniture and other heavy household goods, suffered during the recession. But the company saw sales surge during the summer and said the strong sales picture was continuing.

Excluding new stores and disposals, sales in the six months to September were more than 17 per cent ahead of last year. The figures were even more dramatic in Alders' 10-strong At Home stores, which sell household furnishings on out-of-town retail estates. In these shops, sales over the summer months were a third higher than in the previous year.

Mr Lipsith said that this increase was flattered by poor sales during last year's hot summer, but shoppers had continued to spend freely during the autumn. In the first nine weeks of the current financial year, comparable sales were 14 per cent higher than last year. The group's total sales last year were £756 million.

Vested interests block WTO plan



Cheers and tears... As representatives of western states toast each other, little has emerged from the Singapore conference to help a child worker in India. MAIN PHOTOGRAPH: JAYANTA SIKH

Poorest traders kept on outside

Larry Elliott in Singapore

THE world's poorest countries look set to leave the World Trade Organisation ministerial conference empty-handed after the collapse of a plan to give them duty-free access to the rich markets of the West.

Some of the stiffest opposition to the blueprint, put forward by WTO director Renato Ruggiero, came from a handful of Asian textile exporters who feared it would boost Bangladeshi producers at their expense.

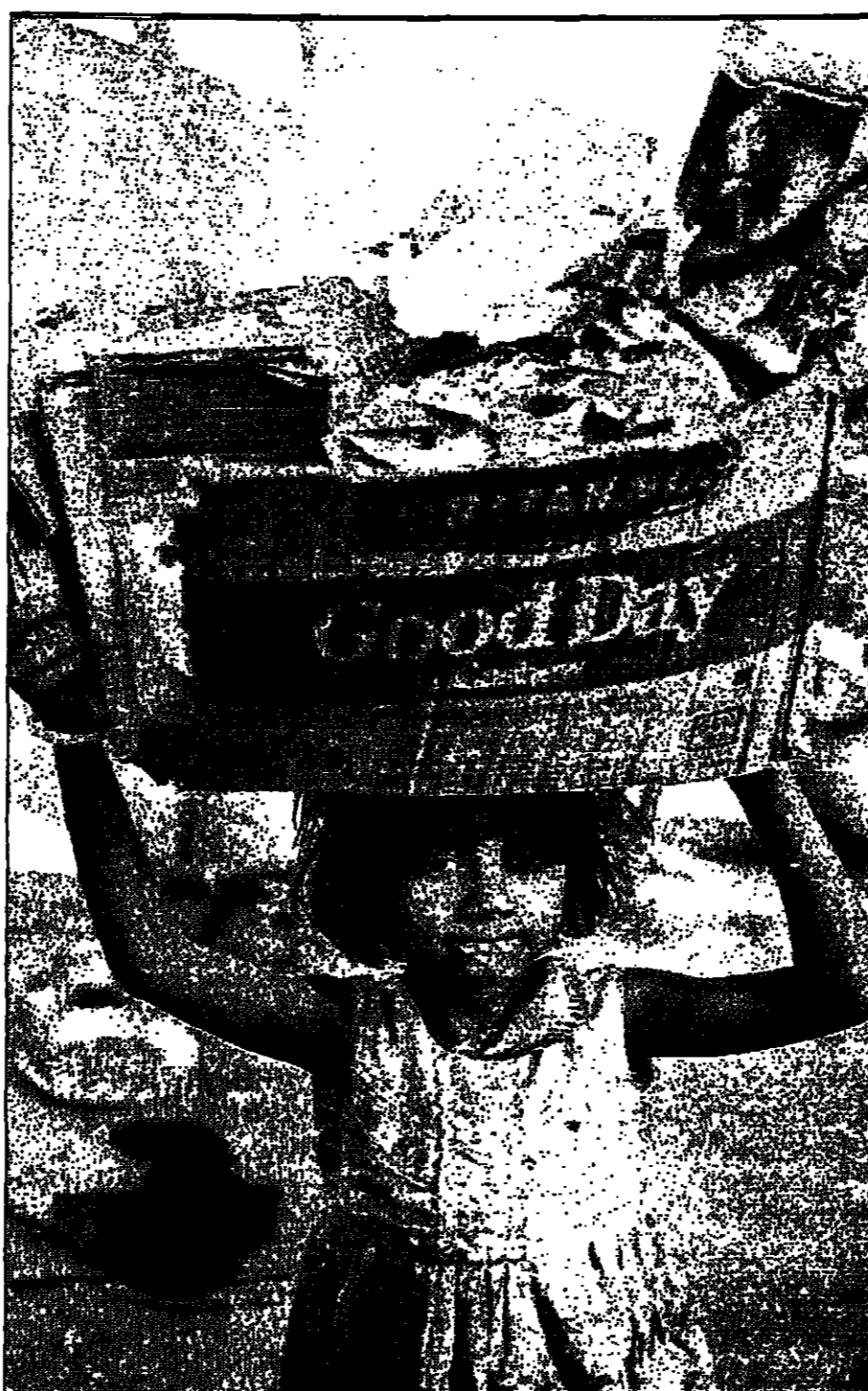
They joined forces with many western nations — although not Britain — in forcing Mr Ruggiero to water down his idea to a general commitment to address marginalisation.

Saharan Africa and only two — Bangladesh and Haiti — are significant clothing and footwear exporters.

Under pressure from poorer nations and the aid agencies, the WTO has been eager to show that free trade brings benefits to all its 127 members and not just the developed economies of Europe, North America and East Asia.

A report by Christian Aid this week reflected concern that the poorest countries are being marginalised when it said 48 developing countries are worse off as a result of the last round of trade liberalisation.

It strongly endorsed the idea, floated by Mr Ruggiero at last summer's Group of Seven summit in Lyon, that the least developed countries should face zero tariffs in an attempt to build up their export industries.



There had been a chance, going into the Singapore talks, that the West might agree to the Ruggiero plan as a way of securing agreement from developing countries on changes to investment rules and competition policy.

Chief economist Richard Blackhurst said African nations stood to reap little benefit from the Uruguay Round of talks because they had taken only small steps towards trade liberalisation. Opening up their economies would mean richer rewards.

phasing out the multi-fibre arrangement — the protectionist measure that keeps low-cost imports out of western markets — will eventually bring huge benefits to developing countries.

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News in brief

Waldegrave pensions boast angers MPs

THE Treasury Chief Secretary, William Waldegrave, came under fire last night as he insisted future generations of taxpayers would thank the Tories for their drive to push state-funded pensions out to the private sector. As MPs on the Treasury select committee questioned him about Government finance plans in the Budget, he argued that reducing pension liabilities was crucial to cutting overall spending and had been tackled more successfully in the UK than in most other countries. It would mean not having to increase taxation on future generations to fund pension payments. "It was one of the most important financial changes of all from the 1980s and people will look back on it with great admiration."

Watchdogs learn to share

FIRST steps towards bringing the gas and electricity regulators under one roof appear to have been taken yesterday with the announcement that a leading official is to work for both watchdogs. Eileen Marshall, who had been poached from the Office of Electricity Regulation to work for Ofgas, is to return to Ofgas for one day a week while continuing at Ofgas for the rest of the time. The right-wing economist was widely seen as the leading light behind the review of changes for British Gas's TransCo pipeline business, now the subject of a Monopolies Commission inquiry. She is an enthusiastic champion of competition and the free market.

Virgin Direct censured

VIRGIN Direct, the financial services arm of Richard Branson's business empire, was yesterday rapped over the knuckles for claiming in an advertisement that the insurance industry had failed "to protect families in ways to suit them best". The Advertising Standards Authority upheld a complaint from a trade body for independent financial advisers that Virgin's advertisement was "unfair and likely to mislead". Virgin said earlier complaints had been dismissed. — Richard Miles

Chemical compound created

GERMAN chemicals group Hoechst said it would spin off its specialty chemicals business to Clariant of Switzerland, creating a company with annual sales of about DM9 billion (£3.5 billion). Hoechst said the move, which will leave it with a "significant minority stake" in the enlarged Clariant, is designed to cut costs, while Clariant, spun off by Sandoz last year, would gain a competitive advantage.

Ex-minister joins Unigate

JOHN MacGregor, former Conservative education and transport secretary, and MP for Norfolk South, yesterday joined Unigate, the dairy and distribution firm, as a non-executive director. Mr MacGregor, who was minister of agriculture, fisheries and foods between 1987 and 1989, is also a director of Associated British Foods and Slough Estates. — Reuters

Supermarkets stunt greenery

SUPERMARKETS are holding back the growth of green shopping because they do not provide clear product information, according to the National Consumer Council. Research by the NCC found that one in three consumers is committed to buying products which do less damage to the environment, while one in five regularly buys green products. But the NCC says shoppers are hampered by a lack of clear information. — Roger Couze

From bomb sites to prime sites

After the devastation of the early 1990s commercial property has become fashionable again, writes Ian King

SUDDENLY commercial property that most bombed-out markets in the early 1990s — is sexy again, and John Ritblat, the godfather of the sector, is sitting pretty.

ensured that retail rents have also flourished. The question now is what 1997 will hold for the commercial property market, and, as the sector's great survivor, Mr Ritblat is better placed to comment than most.

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Carlton changes image with £17m Getty film library stake

Pauline Springett

MEDIA group Carlton has forked out £17.3 million on a 10 per cent stake in Getty Communications, the film and picture library company backed by the Getty family dynasty.

Carlton has the option to increase its investment to 20 per cent within two years.

Jonathan Klein, Getty's chief executive and co-founder, said the newly injected funds would be used to expand the company organically and by acquisition.

Carlton's chairman, Michael Green, will join the Getty board as a non-executive director and Mr Klein said: "Michael has done with Carlton what we would like to do here."

Mr Klein said the deal would enable Getty Communications to benefit from Carlton's technical expertise in areas such as the manipulation of images on screen.

Mr Green said the deal would enable Carlton to tap into the distribution industry of distributing still and moving pictures. "Getty is at the forefront of this change," he said.

Mr Klein created Getty Communications three years ago with Mark Getty, the son of J. Paul Getty II the philanthropist.

Each founder owns just under 4 per cent of the company.

Getty Communications has since started to build up a portfolio of film and photograph libraries. In 1995 it acquired the Tony Stone Images business, a contemporary photographic library and this year it bought the Hulton Deutch collection, one of the world's most famous photographic collections. In June the company was floated on the US Nasdaq exchange.

صكنا من الاجل

Racing

British Horseracing Board chairman replies to his critics in forthright Glimrack speech. Chris Hawkins reports

Wakeham emphasises need for unity

LORD Wakeham came out fighting in his speech at last night's Glimrack Dinner at York, traditionally held in honour of the winner of the Glimrack Stakes in August, accusing his critics of naivety and racism and insisting that industry chiefs had more to offer than their own narrow interests.



Debut defeat... Moonax puts in a good leap on his first outing over hurdles at Huntingdon yesterday but at the finish he found Sharpical too good

PHOTOGRAPH: FRANK BARNON

"No sooner had the Chancellor sat down than the recommitments began," said Wakeham. "Journalists reached for their phones and the divisions for which racing is regrettably notorious opened up. There were calls for 'Bristram Ricketts, my chief executive, and myself to be sacked or to resign.'"

what goes on in the real world. If racing is to continue to be taken seriously by Government, it needs quickly to develop a perceptible maturity in its approach to key issues and that means putting aside the relentless pursuit of sectional interests.

Racing people come in all shapes and sizes, rich and poor, mean and generous, knowledgeable and ignorant. No activity with which I have been involved in a pretty varied life possesses so many chiefs and so few indians.

great disappointment to me that racing and the betting industry were unable to subscribe to a joint submission to the Treasury.

sergeant-major stance to hint at the way forward and the possible solutions to the prime money crisis in racing.

much racing, particularly where our prize money levels are so desperately low.

tiered structure of racecourses. However, a system of prize money which supports all levels to a degree but particularly encourages the courses that attract the crowds may be acceptable.

Leicester with guide to the latest form

Table of racing results and form for Leicester, including race numbers, names of horses, and their performance details.

Lingfield all-weather Flat card

Table of racing results and form for Lingfield all-weather Flat card, listing race numbers and horse names.

Hexham runners and riders

Table listing runners and riders for Hexham, including names of horses and their respective riders.

Results

Table of racing results from various tracks, including race numbers, horse names, and winning jockeys.

Sharp shock for Moonax

MOONAX, the 1994 St Leger winner, was removed from Coris Champion Hurdle betting after being beaten fair and square by Sharpical on his jumping debut at Huntingdon yesterday.

win over the 13-8 on favourite. Moonax, known for his quirky behaviour on the Flat, set about destroying the runner-up berth in the unsaddling enclosure by lashing out at a fence, but he is still on course for Cheltenham and his trainer Barry Hills was not dependent.

1.50 BUCHANAN ALES NOVICE SELLING HURDLE

Table of racing results for Buchanan Ales Novice Selling Hurdle, listing race numbers and horse names.

2.20 FEDERATION BREWERY HANDICAP HURDLE

Table of racing results for Federation Brewery Handicap Hurdle, listing race numbers and horse names.

2.50 BORDEN COUNTRY INSURANCE NOVICE CHASE

Table of racing results for Borden Country Insurance Novice Chase, listing race numbers and horse names.

2.00 GRESHAM COUNTRYAL Jockey Selling Hurdle

Table of racing results for Gresham Countryal Jockey Selling Hurdle, listing race numbers and horse names.

3.00 OAK HANDBICAP HURDLE

Table of racing results for Oak Handicap Hurdle, listing race numbers and horse names.

1.00 ASH HAYES ONLY NOVICE HURDLE

Table of racing results for Ash Hayes Only Novice Hurdle, listing race numbers and horse names.

1.40 THE SOCIETY HOUSE

Table of racing results for The Society House, listing race numbers and horse names.

1.30 SPURGE NOVICE CHASE

Table of racing results for Spurge Novice Chase, listing race numbers and horse names.

1.00 BANIA AMATEUR HANDICAP

Table of racing results for Bania Amateur Handicap, listing race numbers and horse names.

1.10 BANIA AMATEUR HANDICAP

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2.00 COMMERCIAL CEMENTS HANDICAP

Table of racing results for Commercial Cements Handicap, listing race numbers and horse names.

2.30 STANHOPE HANDBICAP CHASE

Table of racing results for Stanhope Handicap Chase, listing race numbers and horse names.

1.20 RACING CHANNEL NOVICE HANDBICAP CHASE

Table of racing results for Racing Channel Novice Handicap Chase, listing race numbers and horse names.

3.20 FEDERATION BREWERY MIDDLETON LAGER NOVICE HURDLE

Table of racing results for Federation Brewery Middleton Lager Novice Hurdle, listing race numbers and horse names.

3.40 LADROCK ALL-WEATHER TROPHY HANDICAP

Table of racing results for Ladrock All-Weather Trophy Handicap, listing race numbers and horse names.

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Soccer

Two more clubs seek security through the City

Tony May on the stock market ambitions of struggling Southampton and Sunderland

SOUTHAMPTON and Sunderland became the latest clubs to seek City flotations yesterday. Sunderland put a \$47.7 million price tag on their stock market debut...

to raise £30 million from City investors, and it was a key step yesterday when he agreed for the club to be taken over by Secure Retirement...

fans would have to stump up almost \$600 to buy a stake in their club, as the minimum number of shares which can be bought at the \$60 offer price is 100.

Futre is forced to quit

PAULO FUTRE, West Ham's Portuguese international striker, has decided to quit the game at 30 after being plagued by a knee injury.

fine their rigid pay structure if they are to tempt the Swiss international defender Ramon Vega to appear for them in the Premiership.

who is adamant he is worth \$500,000 a year net, is also being courted by Tottenham, but the London club's owner Alan Sugar is adamant he will not pay inflated salaries.

Scottish Premier Division Dundee United 1, Rangers 0

Tangerine tango as Gough and Goram get in a tangle

RANGERS' unexpected slip at Tannadice last night will have been received by Celtic fans as joyously as it was by those following United.

as he made his way in from the left. It was not a penalty but the ball ran to McCoist, six yards out, and the record-breaking striker had a fresh-air swing at it.

Ginola hints at leaving

DAVID GINOLA suggested yesterday that this would be his last season with Newcastle and in English football.

CRICKET



Knight with shining armour... the England batsman hooks a four on the way to his hundred

Tour match: Matabeleland v England XI

Knight hits perky century

NICK KNIGHT spent England's first test day on the Zimbabwe tour painting in the Matopos Hills, a few yards beneath the burial place of Cecil Rhodes.

In Harare, Knight had flopped three times, failing to negotiate the first hour when plentiful swing and seam had been available for the quicker bowlers.

up a hostile spell which failed to fetch him a wicket but which might just bring him a second Test cap down the road at Queen's next week.

palmed the edge past first slip. By this time Rennie had a severe case of indigestion. Mbanga swung the ball both ways as well as making it bounce.

David Hopps in Bulawayo

England XI

England XI

England XI

Harder life for 'lefties'

PHIL TUNNELL, Richard Hill and the like will find life more difficult when the Test and County Cricket Board - at its final meeting today before transmuting into the England and Wales Cricket Board - introduces legislation to curb left-arm spinners who at times fire the ball mindlessly down the leg side.

sent to the batting side. Adventurous spinners will, however, benefit from an extra 12 inches that will be added to the third day of the test.

totally in-house - something which it is hoped will speed up the judicial process.

Azharuddin gives India control with chanceless 88 not out

AN UNBEATEN 88 by Mohammad Azharuddin swelled India's overall lead to 330 runs on the third day of the final deciding Test against South Africa in Kanpur yesterday.

morale when they were beaten by 58 runs in a limited-overs match against an Australian Prime Minister's XI in Canberra.

Team talk

Table with 4 columns: Team, Score, Opponent, Score. Lists various football teams and their results.

Results

Table with 2 columns: Match, Result. Lists various sports results including soccer, basketball, and hockey.

Rugby Union

Table with 2 columns: Match, Result. Lists rugby union fixtures and results.

American Football

Table with 2 columns: Match, Result. Lists American football fixtures and results.

Snooker

Table with 2 columns: Match, Result. Lists snooker fixtures and results.

Fixtures

Table with 2 columns: Match, Date. Lists upcoming sports fixtures.

Soccer

Table with 2 columns: Match, Result. Lists soccer fixtures and results.

Dell to go in Southampton takeover, page 14
Knight century lifts England, page 14

Cambridge supreme at Twickenham, page 15
Sports Academy shortlist named, page 15

SportsGuardian

MOTOR RACING



Tartan title contender... the Stewart-Ford SF1, which was created in nine months and is the first grand prix car to be designed entirely by computer. PHOTOGRAPHS: DOMINICK TYLER

Stewart races back into the fast lane

Debutant GP team up and running in double quick time

Alan Henry

JACKIE STEWART set his sights on a world championship for the new millennium when he unveiled his team's first grand prix car in London yesterday. The Stewart-Ford SF1 was created in only nine months and is the first Formula One car to be designed entirely by computer. It is powered by the latest Ford V10 engine and will make its debut in the first

race of the 1997 campaign in Melbourne on March 9. "The task of creating a new car from scratch in such a short time was formidable," said Stewart. "To the best of my knowledge this is the first Formula One car to have been designed by computer; there is not one conventional drawing board at our Milton Keynes headquarters." Stewart's son Paul, the team's managing director, said: "It has been an enormous challenge to plan the timetable, keep to the budget and

assemble so much in such a relatively short period of time. In many ways it has been nothing short of a miracle." Such is the reputation of the 57-year-old three-times world champion that Stewart Grand Prix have attracted a group of sponsors — uniquely including the Malaysian government, and no tobacco company — who have already put up a total of £15 million. This, combined with a five-year deal for works Ford engines and all associated technical back-up, means that F1's most

spectacular debutant of recent years has secured its operational budget three months before the start of the season. "We are financially sound, fully equipped and ready to go," Stewart said. The drivers are Jan Magnussen of Denmark and Rubens Barrichello of Brazil, although Stewart said the team had been 48 hours away from signing the world champion Damon Hill. "Negotiations went right down to the last couple of days, but I couldn't say we were disappointed because we expected him to go to Jordan. I found it surprising that he eventually went to TWR Arrows. Yet perhaps having the pressure of the reigning world champion in our team would have given us too much to cope with."

Stewart is reticent about the car's potential. "A reputation is built on the past, but success is built on the present and the future. We have got to deliver for the Stewart-Ford team, in our time and at our own pace. "I never promised a win in a grand prix or a championship when I was a driver. I wanted to deliver the best I could; if we were good enough then we would win, if we were really good enough we would win a championship. That's what we have to do again, but in a much more complicated environment. "Winning three world championships at the wheel sometimes seemed easy compared with the challenge of building our own team. It has been a greater challenge, more complicated and more difficult than just being a driver." He paid tribute to the team's technical director Alan Jenkins and to Paul Stewart. "It has been particularly nice to undertake this programme with my own flesh and blood. I really don't think I would have done it without Paul."

Stewart's alliance with Ford represents the continuation of his 32-year liaison with the company. This partnership shows that Ford has become recommitted to F1, said Ford's European motorsport director Martin Whitaker. "Since Michael Schumacher's 1994 world championship victory in the Benetton-Ford I think the company had lost some of the impetus behind its Formula One involvement. We have had two years in the wilderness and now we have the chance with Stewart to seriously get back into it."



Stewart... title ambitions tempered by patience

Ruck 'n' maul — all the way to the bar



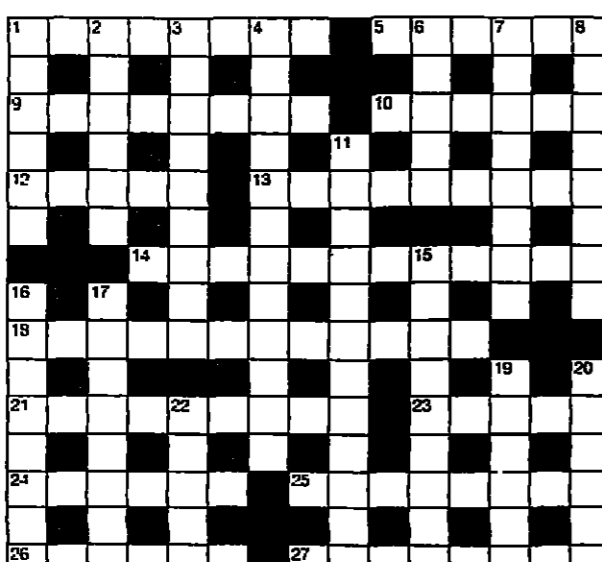
Jim White

THE University Match took place yesterday. For logistical reasons which will soon become apparent, this column was filed before kick-off. However, it is possible to bring you the score: 75,000 Bloody Marys, 150,000 pints of bitter, 12,500 gallons of lager, 6,500 bottles of malt whisky and, if laid end to end, about half a mile of hot dogs. Somewhere in the middle of that, though very few of those in attendance will have noticed, 30 students played rugby. No one is quite sure why a junior match once watched by a couple of thousand die-hard and the Oxford fly-half's dog transmogrified into the City of London's biggest collective drink-in of the year. All we know is that in 1976 the event was dying. There was even talk that, in the same way that the University football match found itself squeezed out of Wembley, the game might be expelled from Twickenham altogether. Then Bowring, the City insurers, agreed to sponsor the event and pump in some much-needed funds (£175,000 this year). Bowring used the occasion both to promote itself within the universities for recruitment purposes (last year's Oxford captain Tyrone Howe, for instance, is now working for the company) and to entertain its clients. Indeed, as a barometer for the way corporate hospitality in sport has developed, the University Match has few equals. In 1976 Bowring entertained 60 guests to lunch in a Fulham restaurant before the game; this year there were about 300 of them in Twickenham's magnificent new Rose Room. By 1986, for no apparent reason, the match had grown into a sell-out, the car-parks around Twickenham bristling with the wall entertained. So why was Bowring suddenly joined by most of the rest of the City of London? Why is it that now a game between two university sides can attract a full house whereas for a spectacle such as England against the New Zealand Barbarians there were more gaps in the South stand than in a seven-year-old's smile? "I think it's because a lot of City people went to the universities and want to support their old teams," says Carol Bowring, the sponsor's PR di-

rector. "Also I think now people find it a breath of fresh air, the chance to see a fully amateur game in the midst of an uncertain world." It's not, then, anything to do with the start of the Christmas drinking season? Nothing to do with the chance for a legitimate midweek skive? "Not at all," says Ms Bowring, who is so committed to the fixture that she slept with the trophy under her bed the night before the game. "That's just a myth. These are rugby people enjoying a great rugby occasion." Clearly Ms Bowring's view from the Rose Room was somewhat different from mine the last time I went. In fact, perched in the vertiginous upper reaches of one of the new stands, I saw very little of the game, my sight of the proceedings being continually interrupted by the row of Father Christmases in front of me. Every two minutes the entire line of merry men would stand to allow a Santa to be chosen to get out to empty his bladder. By half-time three of the St Nicks were asleep, one had contrived to flush his beard down the loo, and another was nursing a slapped cheek after he suggested to a woman in the crowd that she might like to come home and help him unwrap a few Christmas surprises. Like most of the crowd, my day had begun at the Alma pub in Wandsworth at 11am. This was clearly the place that executives of the Barbour coat company go to watch their profits pass by. The place was awash with waxed cotton; apparently, as with Newcastle fans and replica shirts, not to wear a Barbour to the Varsity match is to show you don't really belong. At about 1pm the pub emptied, its occupants swimming to Twickenham. THE thing I couldn't get over, as I approached the ground, was the noise: a constant barking bray as if 75,000 seals were migrating to their mating grounds. Everywhere you looked there were Barbours sniggering, snoring on public benches, a couple of Barbours had ceased to talk English altogether and were conversing in what they assumed was Swahili. Not once, however, in this mel-storm did I see a Barbour act in a remotely violent fashion. It would be unfair, though, to suggest that no one was interested in the competitive elements of the day. After the game had passed in a swirl, I asked a Barbour I encountered outside the ground if he had any idea who had won. "Course, matey," he barked. "It was Big Henry: 14 pints of Wadworth's and a kebab and he still wants to go back to the Alma for more."

Guardian Crossword No 20,833

Set by Bunthorne



- 23,21 Sow dissension on all sides (3-2-3-6)
 - 24 Anti-poetical state, in a way (6)
 - 25 Abstract picture roughly slashed (3-5)
 - 26 Ruth Rendell's first getting the bird (6)
 - 27 Scripture class absorbing a Richardsonian epic (8)
- Down**
- 1 Dine out, with barely-committed vegetarian on salad (8)
 - 2 Grapes here in quite outstanding condition (6)
 - 3 Homeliest form of elastic (9)
 - 4 What 5 might do a-24,21 (4,4,4)
 - 6 Tight one over this band? (5)
 - 7 Bow with ocular manifestation of Christmas (5,3)
 - 8 Form the core of a ten-clue puzzle (9)
 - 11 Straight man seeing Eros exult with a... (1,2)
 - 15... Polish thesis demonstrating the 11 Chopin (8)
 - 16 Hanley's commander loses a turn to a countryman (8)
 - 17 Laing's analysis encompasses the heir-apparent (8)

- Across**
- 1 One's addressed in French on Tour de France bike training (8)
 - 5 Shark is about Pope's essay? (3,3)
 - 9 See 13
 - 10 No stress: not in Langley's circle (6)
 - 12 Never very partial to heat (5)
 - 13,9,14 So disenchanted, bored to the teeth, things aren't the way they could be (4,5,4,4,3,3,1-5)
 - 14 See 13
 - 18 Goal thus achieved after a postal strike! (2,3,7)
 - 21 See 23

Solution tomorrow
22 Stuck? Then call our solvers line on 0201 338 328. Calls cost 50p per minute Mon-Fri, 8am-6pm, and 45p per minute at all other times. Service supplied by ATS

Australians hit all the wrong notes

David Plummer on an ill-judged move to keep cricket's spectators entertained

AUSTRALIA, the land that gave armchair cricket lovers the sight of Waddles the duck accompanying non-scoring batsmen back to the pavilion, often while Tony Greig screamed "Goodnight Charlie" into the nearest microphone, has had second thoughts about its latest gimmick to brighten up games for paying spectators. When the Australians played West Indies in World Series one-day games last week, the visiting batsmen were surprised to hear the strains of Hit the Road, Jack, Return to Sender, and See You Later, Alligator played over the Tannoy as they headed for the pavilion. And there was no musical accompaniment when the Australians themselves made the long walk. Yesterday's Melbourne Age contained a swingy editorial about this, and the

Australian Cricket Board later said the practice would be dropped because it might be considered unsporting. "There used to be... polite applause as batsmen began their long walk back to the pavilion. Now there are bursts of amplified pop music, apparently selected with intimidation or humiliation in mind," wrote the Age's leader writer. The ACE's marketing manager David Fouvy said the tunes were being dropped to put the emphasis on positive aspects of the game. "We found that it was not appropriate because there was a risk these songs could be misunderstood. We did not want there to be any chance it might be seen as gloating." Queen's We Will Rock You will still be used, though, as will the voice of the cartoon character Homer Simpson. For next summer's Ashes series, maybe the England side should consider blasting Colonel Bogey through the Lord's Tannoy as the Aussies depart the middle. And the voice of Mr Magoo might be appropriate as England's batsmen make the long walk.

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Christmas Decorations

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